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POCKET NOVELS

The Swamp Rifles. 204



THE SWAMP RIFLES

20

THE
SWAMP RIFLES.

A TALE OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY C. DUNNING CLARK,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

141 THE MUTE CHIEF.

197 THE PRAIRIE TRAPPER.

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THE SWAMP RIFLES.

CHAPTER I.

SILE STAPLE.

THE war for Independence had shifted from the north to the south, and royalty was apparently triumphant from shore to sea. But, bands of patriots had already begun that system of predatory warfare, which eventually was the salvation of the southern provinces. Men, who had nothing on their side but strong arms and willing hearts, without weapons, without munitions of war, living literally from hand to mouth, became in time a terror to the invaders. It was long before they learned the lesson. Stiff-necked by nature, the English could not believe that such bands could long hold out, or do them any great damage. They soon found, however, to their cost, that these hardy sons of the soil were not to be despised. First, the capture of a small and comparatively unimportant train would supply them with arms. Then, the little band would form the nucleus of a larger force, until they swept out from their swamp fastness, perhaps two or three hundred strong, and, falling upon some outpost or train, would annihilate the guard, and seize upon supplies valuable for others, eager to have work to do, but restrained by want of weapons and support.

Marion, Pickens, Lee, Horry, Graham and Taylor. These are historic names. And yet we know from what small beginnings they formed the commands which, in after days, worried the enemy and spread terror among their advanced posts.

The men of the south, in those days, were peculiarly adapted for this sort of service. The rank and file knew the swamps by heart. Many of them had, for many years, obtained a living by fishing and hunting in them. The leaders were not unacquainted with their primeval solitudes, for they had followed the deer into their depths, and roused the

alligator from his sleeping-place by the side of the stagnant pools. Hidden in the recesses of these limitless swamps were many islands, almost impenetrable in their border of morass and jungle, and the secret of whose existence was known to but few. These places, in after days, they made available for the purpose of hiding from the British, when pressed too hard, or when assailed by too great numbers.

It was not desirable for them to meet large bodies of regulars, when they could avoid it. At least, Marion and Sumter rarely, if ever, did so. They preferred to sally out at the dead of night, and fall suddenly upon a sleeping camp of Tories or regulars, who woke only to hear the clink of the saber and the rattle of spurs, or the groans of men in the death agony. Singleton, Taylor, Washington, Lee, and men of their disposition, were ready to meet the foe in the open field, and of course suffered more than their more wary compatriots, while inflicting no greater loss on the enemy.

Banister Tarleton was, at the time under notice, at the height of his fame as a vigilant and untiring officer, execrated by the Whigs, and made much of by the Tories and Royalists, who knew they had no other such subordinate leader to run down the enemy. It was impossible for the light-armed troopers of the partisan leaders to meet the heavy dragoons of Tarleton, in the charge and assault, and it was not surprising that the enemy formed a very poor opinion of the prowess of the southern horse.

It was at that period in the history of the war when the wary Greene, the sturdy Rhode Island man, was retreating before the advancing forces of Cornwallis, now and then turning upon the enemy, and dealing him a vigorous blow, when a man stood alone on the bank of the Pedee river, in what was called Marlboro' district. In person he was rather slightly built, of dark complexion, as if he had braved the sun and wind of many summers in a southern climate. His frame, though slight, was well knit and powerful, and a certain wiry quickness of motion would have shown a close observer that he was a dangerous man to deal with. His restless gray eyes were roving quickly up and down the stream, as if in expectation of some one. He wore a plain blouse of homespun, belted about the waist by a broad band of tanned leather,

and bearing a brace of heavy pistols. In one hand he carried a good rifle. The other held the bridle of a powerful horse.

"I wish he'd come," muttered the man. "He knows it's time, I reckon."

His gaze was directed toward a farm-house on the bank of the creek about a quarter of a mile away. As he looked, the door opened and a person in citizen's dress appeared, with a fowling-piece in his hand. He came forward whistling, and entered the bushes which concealed the man on the bank from the sight of any observer in the house. The moment he passed out of sight of the house, his face, which up to this time showed no thought above a brace of ducks, lighted up suddenly, and he darted to the side of the first man, and shook hands with him eagerly.

"Welcome, welcome, Staple. I waited for you a long time," he said.

"I waited for *you* long enough, old man," said the other, returning the pressure of his hand. "What kept you so long?"

"Amos was at the house," replied the last comer, a gray-headed old man, with a bold, noble face. "And you know he is a bloody Tory. Come. The news, the news!"

"I don't reckon I feel safe, if Joe Amos is sneakin' round yer," said the man with the rifle. "He didn't follow you, I hope?"

"No, no," said the old man, impatiently. "He rode away to the south. He will make trouble about here one of these days. I doubt he's raising a band of Tories somewhere. I wish I could be sure. I'd show your boys the way to whip them. He has been about me for a long time, trying to make out whether I am Whig or Tory. I'd like to tell the sneak, once, just where I stand, and then kill him."

"He'll get his wind stopped one of these days," said Staple, frowning. "I tell you, Samuel Merrill, that sich as he do more to ruin the kentry than a thousand rough-hided chaps. He was bred a gentleman, you see. Every one in Chesterfield and Marlboro' districts knows Joe Amos. A handsome face, a quick finger on a trigger, a good swordsman, a horseman of the first water. Don't you see that sech a man can lead

others? All the young bucks that followed him about before the war will follow him now. And then to have him turn ag'in' the kentry! It makes my blood bile."

"I feel as you do, Sile," said the old man. "I'd like to know what brings him to my house so much."

"Would you?" said Silas Staple, laughing. "You don't mean to ask me to believe you don't know that yer?"

"I don't, really," said the old man.

"Then I know a thing you don't, Sam Merrill. You oi chaps never see any thing of that kind. Of course he comes to see Lizzie."

"What?"

"Lizzie. You know that gal, don't you? Lizzie Merrill. Your darter. *That's* what brings him to the farm-house so often, as it has brought many another man in these districts."

"Do you tell me, seriously, that you think that Tory has dared to look at my girl?" said Merrill, in a low voice, full of anger.

"Of course I do! I thought you knew Joe Amos. It seems you don't. That yer skunk has been hankering after Lizzie for the last five years. Mind, I didn't say the gal encouraged him. She don't like him none too well, I judge. But, he won't git off the track for no man; see if he does."

"I'll cut his throat. *My* girl! I won't believe it."

"Won't?" said Staple, with a derisive laugh. "It's been goin' on under your nose for five years, an' you've never seen it! You are a nice man for a family party, I don't think!"

"I will follow him."

"And do what? Come. Don't rile up about a trifle. The gal is pretty, an' good; she's patriot to the heart's core, and ain't goin' to take up no sech crooked stick as Joe Amos, for all his handsome face. Now let's talk business. Where is Greene?"

"He has divided his army into two parts. One is at Broad and Pacolet junction."

"Never mind Morgan's command," said the man. "I'm just from there. Where's Greene himself?"

"He is at Cheraw Hill. All you've got to do is to keep on down the river and you will find him. It isn't five miles. What news from Morgan?"

"The news is that Banister Tarleton has fouled a snag," replied Staple. "He thought he could walk into us just as he liked. I don't reckon he did it. Old Morgan give it to him, hot an' heavy. We didn't leave him many leather-legs to make back to the earl."

"Beaten—Tarleton beaten? It hardly seems possible."

"'Tis though. Oh, it did me good to see the backs of Tarleton's men at last. Now, look you; you may talk about rig'lars as much as you like, but, they cain't stand rifles. I know my rifle yer picked an officer off a white hoss, at four hundred yards, as they was coming at us, full chisel. You never saw men look so astonished in your life. What do you think men can do that only raise their guns breast-high, an' don't take no aim? I don't care a red penny for them—not a Continental cuss."

"I think rifles best. But, what was the loss on our side?"

"Ours? Didn't amount to much. They was whopped before they knew it, and old Tarleton rode away to Cornwallis, damning the riflemen. Oh, won't he rage when he gits any of our poor fellows down."

"He is a brute, but a good soldier. Where is Morgan now?"

"He is on the march to join Greene. He crossed Broad river on the seventeenth of the month, and sent me ahead. I wanted to see you. What do you think of our new General?"

"He'll do," said the old man. "None of your rash, hot-headed fellows, but a good soldier, and one that will trouble Cornwallis yet. The earl is on the march; or at least about to go."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. A courier came in to-day and told me. Greene don't quite understand what he is after. I reckon you had better push on."

"So I had," said the man, bounding into the saddle. "He ought to know. Morgan may need his help before long. Good-by."

The horseman dashed into the stream and struggled to the other shore, holding his rifle high above his head. As he

rose from the water on the far shore he was conscious that a man, in the dress of a gentleman of that period, was seated in his saddle watching him.

"Ha," said he, as he saw Sile Staple's face. "My old friend, Sile Staple! My good fellow, how do you find yourself?"

"None the better on your account, Joe Amos," said Sile, in a sulky manner. "Don't stop me. I can't talk."

"But, wait a moment," said the new-comer. "I have good reasons for wishing to speak with you."

The speaker was a handsome young fellow, dark complexioned, with thin lips, long, curling hair, and a graceful manner. The only arms he wore were a pair of pistols and the sword at his thigh.

"Come, Sile," he said. "Don't let us get angry at one another, old friends as we are. I want to hear the news. Penned up as we are here, very little reaches us, and I rather think you have ways of getting news rather better than common."

"S'pose I have," said Sile; "I don't retail it everywhere. Git out of the way."

"I really can't allow you to treat me in so cavalier a manner, Sile," said Amos. "I am astonished that you should speak so to a man raised in the same section with yourself, and one that you have fished and hunted with for ten years or more."

"Times has changed," said Sile. "A man don't know his friends fully. These ain't days to answer every foolish question a man wants to ask. Besides, I've got business and can't stop."

"I won't ask for more than five minutes of your time," said Amos.

"Promise that?" said Sile.

"Yes."

"Then blaze away. I won't answer any thing I don't like."

"Which way did you come?"

"From Broad river."

"Then you have seen Morgan?"

"Perhaps."

"Did you hear any rumor of a battle somewhere about Cowpens?"

"A country fellow I met did say something about a fight, and the darned fool would have it that Tarleton got a peelin'."

"Nonsense!"

"Jest what I said," replied Sile. "It don't stand to reason, you know; Tarleton's men were rig'lars, and how do you reckon our boys could stand up ag'in them. Ain't the Britishers told us, time an' time ag'in, that a rig'lar *can't* git licked? And what business have these buckskin claps to talk of whipping them?"

"You are a sensible fellow, Sile. Upon my word I supposed that you thought the Whigs could do something against the regulars. This rumor of Tarleton's defeat *can't* be true; Tarleton's men are the pick of the army."

"And if it should be true?"

"It is impossible. Why did you not cut down the bumpkin who spread the report?"

"Well, it's a queer district, Amos. The people round there are mostly Whigs, and they might not have took it in good part. The darned fools actually believe it."

"But where was Morgan then?"

"I couldn't say. Tarleton was after him with a sharp stick, and he had broke up his camp on the Broad, and was goin' toward Cowpens, where they say this battle was. It's a queer story. What if it should be true?"

"Oh, no, it can't be supposed."

"That's what I think. But, what if Morgan was fool enough to turn and fight? You know the old man is plucky; something might turn up Tarleton didn't count on. He mout find a good many rifles with the buckskins, and perhaps they'd fight harder than he thought. Not like Buford. Don't you think Tarleton was a little rough on Buford? They do say he cut off their hands when they held 'em up cryin' for quarter."

"It served them right," said Amos; "they deserved no mercy."

"They didn't git none, you understand; he chopped 'em up right bad. And you think he did right?"

Sile Staple's eyes were beginning to gleam fiercely.

"Certainly. The scoundrels were banded together to fight against their king ; so perish all traitors, say I. But, Sile, I am glad to see you are loyal. There was a rumor about here that you had joined the Whigs. I didn't believe it, for I thought you a man of more sense. When can I see you again ?"

"What do you want of me?" said Sile.

"I want you to join me in an enterprise for the good of the king and country," replied Amos. "Where will you meet me?"

"At the bend of the river yonder."

"When?"

"To-morrow morning at nine o'clock. Now let me git on. I've got to work sharp to keep clear of Greene's outposts, ain't I?"

"Yes. Keep well to the north ; I passed through that way myself. Good-day."

He entered the stream and crossed. Sile gazed at him in a meditative manner, calculating the probable results if he were to shoot him. His hand dropped upon a pistol ; but he thought better of it, replaced the weapon, and went slowly on his way.

CHAPTER II.

A RAMPANT REBEL.

Amos, after crossing the stream, rode to the house of Samuel Merrill. The old man, having returned from his interview with Sile, was seated on the verandah, smoking a pipe. He looked up with any thing but a pleasant face as he saw who his visitor was. Amos laughed lightly.

"No wonder you look grum, Uncle Sam," he exclaimed. "I suppose I bore you dreadfully ; but, then, you must make allowance for me. There is no place I like to visit so well as your house."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the old man, with a look of

annoyance upon his face. "But why are you back so soon? I thought you had gone to Hillsboro'."

"I meant to go there," replied Amos; "but some information I picked up on the way turned me back. Every thing looks bright. In a year from this time the name of Whig will be no more in the Carolinas."

"Do you think so," responded Merrill. "I thought they never showed more life than now."

"Not in the open field. The skulking thieves run from our armies like fogs from the sun. It is a strange thing to me that you never declare openly in favor of the king."

"Have I not taken out a protection?" Merrill grimly queried; "I have it here, and sometimes I wish I had never seen one. I love old Carolina; no one in the old State has her welfare more at heart; and it seems a hard thing that a man whose arm is yet strong, though his head is gray, should be forced to take such measures to secure his safety. I would be better in the service."

"It is open for you," answered the young man, quickly. "I have always said that you are too brave a man, and too good a soldier, to see your king made a mock and a by-word. Join hands with me; in a few days my men—"

"Your men?"

"Perhaps it would be well to keep it secret. But no; you shall hear it. I am not idle in these troublous times. I tell you that in less than a week I shall have a force at my command which will make Chesterfield and Marlboro' a terror to all Whigs."

"Are you, then, enlisting men?"

"I am indeed. Pyle is ostensibly in command. But I have the promise, both from Rawden and Cornwallis, that when I raise four hundred recruits, I shall receive a commission as colonel. I never will consent to be led by such a man as Pyle."

"So I should think. We all know him—the base-hearted wretch who has turned against his country in the hour of her trial."

"Be careful, Samuel Merrill. I have suspected this for some time. Secretly, you are in favor of this accursed rebellion."

"You wrong me," rejoined Merrill, with an inscrutable smile. "I am in favor of no such thing. But, a man like Pyle makes my blood boil in my veins. It is the fact that *such* men as *he* wear swords, that has kept me from the field."

"Do not let that turn you," said Amos. "Come; I can get you a major's commission, I know I can. Cornwallis promised that I should choose my officers. And, though Gurney lays claim to the post, I can find means to set him aside. I would have you for lieutenant-colonel, but Samson raised nearly half the men, and has quite as much influence as I have with the Commander-in-chief—curse him for an oily-tongued rascal."

"There seems to be a fine feeling of good-fellowship among the officers of your regiment," said Merrill. "But, don't ask me to decide upon this matter at this time. There are reasons, which I can not now give, why it is impossible. My main reason, however, is this: I can not leave Lizzie alone. Think what it would be if the poor girl were left to herself, in a country traversed by hostile armies. I can not do that."

"No; it would not do, unless she were sent to a safe place. She might go to my house; she would be safe there."

"In Dorchester?"

"Yes."

"That would not do."

She could go as my wife; I love her dearly," said Amos.

"Sir!" shouted Merrill, springing to his feet, and making a motion to leap at the throat of the other, "what do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. Is there any thing so terrible in that?"

"No, no; I beg your pardon; but Lizzie seems a child to me still. I never allow myself to think of her as married, and going away from me. It is a strange feeling to me now; let us speak of it no more."

"I must. This time is as good as another. I love the girl; I have loved her for a long time, and wish to make her my wife."

"Have you spoken to her on the subject?" said the old man, in a hushed voice. "I hope not."

"Not directly; but I think she likes me, and it shall be my labor to make her care for me well enough to marry me. If I fail, well and good; all I ask now is your consent. That once obtained, the rest is easy."

"I can not answer you," said Merrill. "I may say I *will* not answer now; do not ask me."

"Have you any thing against my character?" demanded the young Tory. "If you object to my loyalty to my king, I shall know what to say to *that*. If not, you can have no serious objection. I flatter myself that my reputation is as good as most young men's; I drink only occasionally, and that in our day, when all men guzzle wine after dinner. I do not game; I never bet; I am a constant attendant on the Established Church, and never allow myself to miss the responses."

"All this is very well in its way; but I must have time. This is not a thing to be lightly done. The man who marries my little girl must be in every way worthy of her. I must be sure of this."

"In point of wealth, I think you can say nothing," persisted the young man; "my estates are far more valuable than yours, I am sure."

"I do not doubt that, sir; such things would have no weight. If you were a poor man, and I felt in my heart that you were calculated to make my daughter happy, I would give her to you joyfully, and you should never want for money. You will find that riches do not constitute happiness."

"Then you refuse your consent?"

"For the present, decidedly."

"You do not even allow me to say to her that I love her, and labor to win her affection?"

"You must not speak to her on the subject," replied Merrill.

"These are hard conditions. How long must I wait for your answer?"

"Until I have satisfied myself that you are or are not the man for my son-in-law. Until then, you must not do or say

any thing to lead her to suppose that any such conversation has occurred."

"I can not consent to be bound by such conditions," said the young Tory, in an angry tone. "It is easy enough for you to set a time for your answer—say a week or two, a month at most."

"I shall set no time."

"I shall continue to visit her, then. You can not deny me that," said Amos.

"I suppose not. You must come when you like; but hush, here comes Lizzie."

As he spoke the door behind them opened, and a young girl, singing a rebel air, came out upon the verandah. She was one of those dark, voluptuous beauties so often seen in the south, with glossy black hair, eyes of the same sable hue, and a full, healthful figure, which might well have set the young men of the district mad. In one hand she held a small flag, which she flaunted in the air upon seeing who was with her father on the verandah.

"I thought you had gone, Mr. Amos," she said, coquily.

"Did you think I could stay away, Lizzie?" he replied, with a languishing glance.

"Oh, fie! keep those killing glances for the ladies of Dorchester and Charleston," she said. "They are lost upon me. Seriously, I thought we were rid of you for one day at least. You do not leave us alone long enough to talk rebellion. We must do it now and then, or we will surely 'spile,' as little Neddy says. How can you keep away from Dorchester so long?"

"It is easily done, when I can come to you."

"Thank you; but will not the ladies miss you? I have it from fair authority that you are very much in request in the garrison towns; Kitty Newton said so only yesterday."

"Miss Kitty does me too much honor to mention my name. Really, now, I am no such lady-killer as she would make me out."

"Then you are belied. Why, they do say that you rival Archie Campbell in madness, Fool Carp in foolishness, and Harry Barry in flirtation."

"Lizzie!" ejaculated her father, fearing she would go too far, "you are too hard on Mr. Amos."

"My dear father, will you let me talk to this young man? He really deserves no quarter. Why he should waste the manners so fitted to adorn the court of his royal highness, Prince Balfour, in such a place as this, I can not conceive; and we really would not have the heart to keep him away. I am showing him that he stands in his own light by remaining here. Besides, how am I ever to talk to you? I have heard glorious news; I will tell him that, and then he will go away. What would you say if you knew that Colonel Tarleton had been beaten by Morgan's buckskins? I am celebrating that event."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Amos. "And have you really heard that silly story?"

"Yes, I have heard that same silly story; and, silly as it is, it has the merit which you can not claim for a good many of your speeches; it is *true*!"

The Tory began to bite his lips nervously. He saw that she was half inclined to affront him, for what reason he did not know.

"Permit me to ask where you obtained your information, Miss Lizzie?"

"Very well; ask."

"Where was it?"

"From—; but I *won't* tell that. I have seen one who has ridden hard from Cowpens, where the battle was fought, and he says that Tarleton barely escaped with his life."

"I have heard this story from another source. Doubtless he obtained his information from the same man."

"And who was your informant?"

"I will be more complaisant than you are, and give you information. It was your old neighbor, Sile Staple. He did not believe the story; I was pleased to find that he was a good and loyal man."

"Who?" said Lizzie, looking at him in astonishment. "You do not mean to assert that my old friend, Sile Staple, is a Tory?"

"I do not think I ever saw a man from the lower classes who had more clearly defined views on the subject. I have

arranged a meeting with him to-morrow, and hope to make him one of my men. If I do so, his knowledge of the swamps will be invaluable to me. He promised to meet me, at any rate."

"But it can not be," declared the girl, looking puzzled; "Sile is not that kind of person."

Here she caught her father's eye, and seeing the warning conveyed by it, paused and said:

"But, if *he* is a traitor, *I* am true; I am a rebel; I glory in it; I am proud of it. I am going to wear this flag for an apron. You shall see me, and say whether or not it is becoming."

"Any thing would become you except that," said he. "I hope you will not allow yourself to engage in any such cause. You should be careful; there are men in this district so loyal to the king that they would forget your sex if they saw you in such a costume."

"They must be *very* nice men," said the girl; "I should like to know them. Some of your compatriots, Mr. Amos?"

He frowned.

"You are trying to be provoking, I know," he replied. "Loyalty is not a thing to be sneered at even by you. Let me beg of you to restrain your impulse to jest upon such a theme. And I must warn you now that dangerous times are at hand in Marlboro'. In a few days at most, the rebels will be flying in this direction, followed by our troops; and a victorious army, in the heat of passion, sometimes does things it would not do in cool blood."

"You need not tell me that," said the girl, drawing herself up. "I know your men, and what they have done. There is many a desolated home in the lower districts to-day, which can bear witness to the brutality and savage hearts of the British hirelings, and of the Tories worse than they. Say nothing to me of them."

"Traitors have no rights except to a shameful death," the Tory half sneered.

"Your officers in Charleston and Dorchester fare sumptuously now," she added. "They live in finer houses than they ever saw at home, and drink good wines, which they

only knew by name. But, it is stolen property. These gallant men who are in the field to-day left all they had for these human wolves to fatten on."

"Lizzie—Miss Merrill," said Amos, pale with rage; "be careful what you say. You are insulting British officers, and my friends."

"The more shame to you," she answered, in her clearest voice. "You, who had it in your power to strike in the van of freedom's champions in your own true State, and who have leagued yourself with the scum of the north counties, and are even now preparing to use these vile instruments against the land where you were raised. Away with such men. They are not fit to live."

Her bold eyes were blazing. One white hand was outstretched, pointing at the Tory, who had fallen back in his chair, and was regarding her with a look of the greatest horror and surprise. Mr. Merrill had enjoyed the scene more than he would have cared to own. It showed him that his daughter's heart was too deeply engaged in the cause of America to care for one who would soon be fighting against her.

"I will remember this language," the Tory finally cried, literally gasping for breath.

"I thought you would. Take it to your heart and think of it. Oh, Joseph Amos! Have you never thought, that when you stand with others before the Great White Throne, and the books are opened, the innocent blood will cry out against you?"

"What would you have me do?"

"Draw the sword, if you must draw it, in behalf of the oppressed. Do not be the aider of the strong against the weak. Leave such wickedness for men of base hearts, for I do not think yours is such; and then, ah, then! you have the thanks of a whole country. That *would* be glorious."

Her eyes were raised toward heaven, and for a moment she seemed like one inspired.

CHAPTER III.

A QUEER CHARACTER.

EVER Amos could not fail to be impressed by the impassioned look of the beautiful girl. He had loved her as only one of his excitable nature could love. He loved her still, even while she heaped upon him these bitter reproaches. His countenance changed from red to white in fitful flashes, until, at last, all the blood seemed to have receded from cheek and lip, leaving him ghastly pale. The old man was appalled by the expression of his countenance, for he knew that such a man would be the one to revenge an insult terribly. Amos spoke at last, and his voice was so harsh and strained that they would not have known it, if they had not stood face to face with him.

"This insult is uncalled for," he said. "It is given because I am loyal to my king. Beware that you do not go too far."

"Is that meant for a threat?" said the girl, boldly.

"No, a warning. I have my reasons for bearing much from you. But, even Lizzie Merrill can go too far."

"I have always spoken as I choose," she said. "Time was, Joseph Amos, when I thought you a true-hearted man. But no true woman, loving her country as I do, can think otherwise than badly of you, when you are arrayed against that country and State."

"Hooray!" said a voice, with a strong nasal twang. "Et-cetera and vice versa. Hip, hip!—ha, ha, ha!"

Both Merrill and Amos turned toward the sound—one in surprise and the other in anger. A man had come out of the open door in the house who deserves a description. A single glance showed that he was of the race of the universal Yankee, and a type of a peculiar class of that race. He was tall and slim, with a prominent nose, twinkling blue eyes, sandy hair, and impudent face—one of the trading, bartering, *ente* species. He held in one hand a slice of bacon, and in the other a large piece of bread which he was devouring in alternate bites of tremendous size.

"What did you say?" demanded Amos, angrily. "This is a private interview."

"I said hooray, etcetera and vice versa, hip!" he repeated, swinging aloft his half loaf of bread.

"Did you address your words to me, sir?" said the other, laying his hand upon his sword.

"Wal, no; I guess not. I made a sort of ginerel remark, so tew speak. Yew see a man can't always restrain his feelin's. Mine are b'ilin' over, jest now. The gal made an observation that sewted me eggzactly, and so I applauded. I'll dew it ag'in, if yew like."

"This is not any part of your business, I take it," said Amos.

"Jess so; jess so. No more it ain't. But, the v'ices bein' loud, forced themselves upon my ear, as it were. I couldn't help hearin' yew, seein' I was partakin' of a *slight* repast in here, set before me by the young lady. Now, yew listen to her, young man. Yew are a fine figger of a human, and could mow a powerful swath in a fight if yew was only a mind tew dew it. I'm a Massachusetts man. I ain't tew blame for that. I'd be a Car'lina man if I could, but, seein' that ain't possible, I must be content tew be *what* I be."

"May I ask who this fellow is, Miss Lizzie?" said Amos, glaring at the unfortunate Yankee, who, the moment he ceased speaking, applied himself to the bread and bacon with vigor.

"Cert'nly, cert'nly," replied he, speaking with his mouth full. "It's a good name, I guess. 'Temyrate, 'tain't a Tory name. Gosh fire my pieter! I wouldn't be a Tory, an' have that pretty gal talk tew *me* the way she did tew *yew*, fur a farm in Salem township, Massachusetts. I wouldn't, so help me Simpkins!"

"You would do well to keep your mouth shut, my friend," said Amos. "I am not in very good-humor just now, and I might do you an injury."

"Ain't dangerous, be yew?" queried the Yankee, in simulated alarm. "Now, *don't* look at me that way. Please don't! Yew hurt my feelin's. Yew dew, by hokey!"

"I'll hurt your body in half a moment if you don't stop talking," said Amos, savagely. "I am speaking to the young lady."

"All right, captain. Jest as *yew* say. I won't speak any more, *jest* now. Ask *yewr* questions."

"Now, Miss Merrill, who is this fellow?"

"I *say*, *yew*," broke in the irrepressible Yankee. "No *fellers*, if *yew* please. I ain't goin' tew be called cout of my name."

"Will you be silent, you scoundrel," roared Amos, half drawing his sword.

"Don't call no names," replied the Yankee. "I ain't goin' tew stand it."

"Don't make him angry, sir," said Lizzie. "I ask you to be more guarded."

"That's it. Ask me tew jump into the river, tew climb a tree, tew fly a kite, tew dew any thing, and Lige Pickerel is *yewr* man. But, don't let that feller try tew drive me. I can't be driv."

"I know nothing about this gentleman, Mr. Amos, except that he stopped here just now and gave me the fullest particulars regarding Tarleton's defeat at Cowpens."

"Defeat! Yew draw it tew mild. He was *licked*; licked clean cout of his big bewts. He had a powerful good hoss, or he wouldn't have got away himself."

"Do you mean to tell me, you low-lived Yankee, that there are men enough in Carolina to beat Banister Tarleton's regiment?"

"So it seems," said Lige, coolly. "I kinder reckon *he* thinks so tew."

"I believe you lie."

"I *know* *yew* dew, if *yew* say Morgan didn't whop Tarleton, and make him run. Don't look fierce at me, and grab holt of *yewr* toad-sticker. I won't stand it. Yew can't scare me. I ain't one of the scarey kind; the trembles don't run in the Pickerel family."

"Did you *see* Tarleton defeated?"

"I tell *yew* I won't say any thing about that. He was licked; that's enough for me."

"If you are honest in this," said Amos, "you can give me the *particulars* of the fight."

"I ain't got time," said Lige, biting a picce out of the bacon. "Don't *yew* see I'm busy?"

"Leave gormandizing for a moment and answer my questions."

"I shan't! I ain't obleeged to answer questions unless I want tew, an' I *don't* want tew. Besides, I've told it all tew the gal and that's enough."

"You must answer. I am an officer in his majesty's service, and you *must* give me the information I desire."

"*Must* is a big word, stranger. We don't use it much up tew Salem. It is true Gireral Washington did use it tew the Britishers in Boston, and they did what he wanted, but it won't work on a Yankee."

"Then I shall take you into custody."

"What's that? Something tew eat?"

"I will make you my prisoner."

"Now *don't*!" said Lige. "I ain't a fightin' character. Don't you scare me now, an' spile my grub."

"You must consider yourself my prisoner, unless you consent to answer my questions."

"Wal, if yew are sot on it I s'pose I must. Go ahead."

"Where was Morgan when Tarleton caught him?"

"I thought you knew that? He was at Cowpens. Queer! I didn't see no pens thar. Mebbe the Britishers stole the cows and tore down the pens. They're ekal tew it."

"Take care, sir. You must bear in mind that I am a British officer."

"*What?* I thought yew was a *Tory*. I beg parding!" said Lige, with a comical bow.

Lizzie laughed outright, and Amos flushed again.

"No buffoonery, sir; and be careful that you make no more aspersions on the character of our men and officers."

"Won't they steal, then? If that's so, they ain't of the same breed of the fellers up our way. *They* steal any thing. A lot of 'em went out to Concord to steal some property there. They met some boys that didn't like to have them take the stores. The darned fools brought their guns, and shot them off at the Britishers. They didn't *run*, mebbe, but marched off pooty lively, I must say."

"What has this to do with the subject in question, sir?" demanded Amos. "Once more, attend to me. How many ragamuffins had Morgan with him?"

"Not one," said Lige. "He don't lead that kind of men, any more'n you lead gentlemen."

"How many renegade Carolinians then?"

"Not any."

"You know what I mean," roared the Tory.

"Then say what you mean. I ain't goin' tew be a dictionary for *yew*," retorted Lige.

"How many men had Morgan?"

"Couldn't say, jest tew a man. Mout be more, mout be less. He didn't have a million, and he had more than a hundred. I didn't count 'em."

"Make a guess."

"Ain't good at guessin'," replied Lige. "Never did guess but once, and then got wolloped fur it."

"Had he a thousand?"

"Perhaps."

"Had he *two* thousand?"

"Couldn't undertake tew say, I am sure."

"How many had Tarleton?"

"See here, mister. I don't know nothin about the number of men. They was jest about even, and Tarleton got licked. That's the way it stands. He rode up to us expectin' to ride us down, an' didn't dew it. That's enough."

"Where is Morgan now?"

"Git out. How dew I know?"

"I see you are determined to answer no questions. I must take you in charge. Consider yourself my prisoner."

"I *won't*!" shouted Lige.

"Don't force me to use my weapons. You are unarmed, and at my mercy."

"Stop a moment, Joseph Amos," said Lizzie. "You can not take this man prisoner. He came here in good faith, and he shall go away in safety."

"It can not be done. He is a spy of Morgan's."

"Spy? How do you make that out? There is no army here, nearer than that of Greene," exclaimed Merrill.

"He is one of Morgan's creatures. He must go with me."

"Not by a jug full," said Lige. "I've got something else tew dew."

Amos laid his hand upon his sword and began to draw

it from its sheath. At the action, Elijah snatched up a heavy chair that stood near by, and dealt him a blow which knocked him senseless to the floor.

"I had tew dew it," said the Yankee, in quick, stern tones, quite unlike his affected manner while speaking to his prostrate foe. "He bring it on him-self. Good-by, miss. I'll see yew ag'in some time. Thank yew for not interferin', sir. Good-day."

With these words, and with a disregard of the right of property quite refreshing to behold, he leaped upon the horse of Amos, which was tied to a post near the verandah, and rode away at full speed toward the river. Amos struggled feebly to his feet just in time to see him press up the opposite bank of the stream and ride away toward Greene's camp.

"The villain has escaped," he cried. "I will have his life for that blow."

"It was your own fault," said the girl. "You should have let him alone. It was not an action worthy of your name, to draw your sword upon an unarmed man."

"He would not yield," muttered Amos.

"You had no authority to arrest or seize him. He has left his own horse in the rear of the house. You will not be wholly unprovided."

"Let me lean on you a moment, Uncle Sam," said the young man, in a feeble tone of voice. "The rascal has a strong arm. There, I am better now. Let me see the horse he has left. Some hack, I suppose. I would not have lost Red-bird for fifty guineas."

Lizzie led the way to the rear of the house. A group of negroes were gathered about the wonderful steed which Elijah had left in the place of his own. The moment Amos saw him, he muttered some exclamation which sounded very much like an oath. Indeed, a more ridiculous-looking animal was, perhaps, never seen. He had been troubled by a lack of provender, as was evident by the protruding angles on his skeleton frame. There seemed to be, literally, no flesh on his bones. He had a large head, a long neck, a set of remarkably thin legs, and a back sharp as a knife-blade. The caparisons were hardly better than the horse. An old saddle, set upon a piece of bed-blanket, with one wooden and one

iron stirrup, and a head-stall formed of pack thread, old rope, and leather.

"Your scoundrel has robbed me of my horse, and left that worthless brute in its place," said Amos, angrily. "I will make him wish he had never been born, when we meet."

"Perhaps you had better wait until the time comes," ejaculated the amused maid. "Can you make any use of this animal? He seems *rather* thin."

"Have you no horse, Mr. Merrill?" said he, looking in despair at the bony beast.

"Not one. Those of my horses which I could spare were run off by Huck's men the last time he passed through here. That fellow cares not whom he robs, friend or foe."

"I suppose I must ride this brute, then," said Amos.

"Ki, massa," said a little darkey. "Dat ain't hoss. He been split in two pieces for mek two hosses, su'ly?"

"I should think so. Get out of my way."

As he approached the animal preparatory to mounting, and laid his hand upon the saddle, the brute whirled suddenly and made a vicious kick at him, which, if it had struck him, would have ended his campaigning forever. It was only by a backward spring of extraordinary quickness, that the Tory escaped at all.

"Hold his head, Neddy," roared Amos. "He is vicious, in addition to his other beauties."

Neddy made a rush at the horse's head. As he came within reach, the long neck was stretched out, and the jaws closed upon the thick, curling wool of the little darkey. In an instant, he was dangling in the air, shrieking for help at the top of his voice, while the sable chorus shouted:

"Dar, dar! Neddy gone dis time, sure 'nuff. Tek his head off, *dis* time."

Neddy's face, full of terror, and almost *white*, whirled round so that they could see it, and the expression of utter misery implanted there was too much for Lizzie; she laughed in spite of his danger. After shaking the boy a moment, the vicious beast dropped him and made a pass at him with both fore feet. But, Neddy rolled too quickly out of reach to be harmed.

"Dar," he said, panting. "Dat 'ar ain't no hoss. He de

debble. I know he de debble. Don't tell me he ain't, 'cause I know him ain't nothing else."

"I begin to think so myself," said Amos, seizing the horse by the bridle. "Be quiet. Gently. I'll kill the brute. Whoa, there. Now, I've got him. Give me that whip, Neddy."

"No, massa Joseph. I nebber come anigh dat critter ag'in. S'pose he catch I by head once more? Tek I head off, smack? How you s'pose I look widout a head? Massa Merrill's niggers ain't goin' to git sp'iled by no sech nonsense."

Amos did not wait for the conclusion of the speech. He was busy with the steed which he bestrode, and which had commenced some of the most wonderful evolutions ever seen in equine experience. Every joint in his body seemed to be in motion; kicking, plunging, rearing on his hind legs, and as suddenly elevating them high in the air, leaping from the ground and alighting on all-fours with a shock almost sufficient to produce lock-jaw.

Before he knew where he was, Joseph Amos was cast like ripe fruit, and struck the ground some ten feet away. The animal was not satisfied with merely throwing his rider, but rushed at him with open mouth, snorting fiercely. Amos drew a pistol from his belt and fired. The ball struck the horse just over the right eye, and glancing from the bone, left a long, bloody mark upon the skin. The beast paused, shook his obstinate head, and turning, set off at a gallop in the direction of the river.

"Get me a rifle," roared the discomfited man. "I'll finish him."

But, as no weapon could be obtained, he was obliged to allow his enemy to escape. With many mutterings of rage, he set out on his four-mile walk, casting ominous glances at Merrill as he went.

He began to doubt the politics of his proposed father-in-law.

CHAPTER IV.

A FATHER'S STROKE.

SILE STAPLE rode straight to the camp of Greene, whom he found, as he had expected, upon the left bank of the Pedee, in the Chesterfield district, opposite Cheraw Hill. The camp was in some confusion, and evidently preparing for a march. He made his way promptly to the marquee of the commanding General, and announced himself as a bearer of dispatches from Morgan. He was at once invited to enter the marquee, where Greene was seated at a small table, looking over his dispatches. Having never before seen the celebrated General and friend of Washington, he looked at him with considerable interest. He beheld a florid, corpulent man, somewhat above the middle size, but showing no great strength of constitution. His forehead and eyes proved him to be a person of steady, cool, and calculating character, one apt to weigh well any thing before he entered upon it. And it was this very characteristic which enabled him to baffle the best British leaders, and to wrest from their grasp the fairest portions of a fair State.

"Who are you?" he said, laying down the paper he held in his hand.

"My dispatches will show, General," said Sile, bashfully; "I ain't nothin' but a common scout, myself."

"But not the less worthy, since you are willing to fight in the cause of our beloved country," said the commander, in the mild, temperate tones he used to use with everybody. "Give me the dispatches."

Sile took his knife from his belt, and sitting down on a camp-stool, removed a small piece of leather which was set into the heel of his heavy shoe, showing a small cavity. From this he took out a piece of paper, containing the dispatch in cypher. The General read it eagerly.

"This is good," he said. "I had a hint that something unusual was in the wind, since the earl is on the march. You

see we are already prepared to do the same. Thank you for your services, Sergeant Staple; will you take a glass of wine?"

"If you please," said Sile.

The General himself poured out the refreshment and handed it to the scout.

"Your health," said the soldier, with a shy duck of the head.

"Will you have another?" said the General.

Sile cast a wistful look at the bottle, but with great self-denial said he would not take any more.

"I've got something I want to say to you, Gineral," said he, "if you kin spare me half a minnit."

"Is it important?"

"I think so."

"Then I am at your service; sit down. John, you need not come in again. See that we are not interrupted. Now, Mr. Staple."

"There's a cuss up here on the Pedee that is doin' a good deal of damage, in a sly way; his name is Joseph Amos; he ain't in the British service reg'lar, but I'm jubous he is getting up a body of men to damage us all he can. Now, what I want is to ketch him a-doin' it; it kin be done, if we manage it right."

"I have heard of the man. Go on."

"I met him yesterday, and the mean hound tried to git me to jine him. I may be awful mean—shouldn't wonder ef I was, but it did go ag'in' the grain to have him talk to me that way. I kept him off, and promised to meet him to-morrer up the stream. Now what I want to say is this: You give me a man or two, jest to snake round and listen till they hear him say something to convict him, and I'll nab him."

"You shall have the men. I am marching to meet Morgan. Cornwallis is after him. If you take this man, bring him to me on the Catawba. I ride to-day with two or three men as orderlies, for I must see Morgan at once."

"Kin I pick the men, Gineral?"

"Yes."

"'Cause they must be swamp-suckers; nothing else

would be a grain of use to me. I know where to find my men."

Greene was about to answer when there was a tumult outside the marquee as of two or three voices in loud contention. In a moment this noise ceased, and then recommenced again.

"Yew git eout!" said a voice, with a Yankee twang. "Don't I want tew see the Ginerel? Don't p'int that bayonet at my weskit, or I'll give you something as will make you weep tears of agony. Git eout, I say; and me a-starvin' tew!"

"I tell you that you can not go in; the General is engaged," said the voice of the guard.

"Yew git eout. He ain't engaged—he's married; but what's *that* got to dew with my goin' in? His wife ain't with him, is she?"

"No, you fool. He is talking with a man bearing dispatches. Keep back, I say, or I will work a buttonhole in your jacket that you can't sew up again in a hurry."

"Yew do it, and yew will be the sorriest man that ever lived. I'd eat yew, body an' bones. I've got dispatches, tew, mebbe."

"Who from?" said the guard, incredulously, keeping his bayonet-point at the Yankee's breast.

"Never yew mind. I've got 'em, so I guess yew'd better let me go in; if yew don't I'll throw ye over that little white hut."

"Corporal of the guard!" shouted the soldier. "Here's a man will go in and see the General."

The subaltern came up, and looked over the figure of the visitor with an aspect of ill-concealed disdain.

"You *are* a sweet specimen to want to see General Greene," he said. "Now, see yer; you go away."

"I've got dispatches, I tell yew!" roared the Yankee. "The Ginerel will shewt the hull b'illin' of yew when he gits 'em. Now, mind I tell yew."

The officer was about to order up a guard to take the Yankee in charge, when the General appeared at the door of the marquee. He held out his hand and stopped the dispute.

"You say you have dispatches," said he. "Give them to me."

"Be yew the Ginerall?" demanded the Yankee.

"Yes."

"Then I'll give 'em tew yew. That chap with the bagonet warn't goin' tew let me come in, it seems. He's a nice man, *he is!* He p'inted that weepson right at me. That ain't accordin' tew the articles of war, I guess."

"Come in," said the General. "I will look over your dispatches."

Sile stared as the Yankee came in, and grinned expressively. The General looked over the paper which Lige handed him. It was an additional dispatch from Morgan, detailing more clearly his proposed route.

"That ain't all, Ginerall," said the Yankee. "I fouled a snag up the river at a house whar the pootiest gal in Car'lina lives, I don't know any name for her but Lizzie, but she is a beauty. I went in tew git something tew eat, and while I was there I got in a little dispoct with a chap that called hisself Amos, what wanted me tew tell him all about this fight at Cowpens. He's a most dirty Tory, and that's trew."

Lige related his quarrel with Amos, and that he heard him say he was an officer in the king's service.

"This information is valuable," said Greene. "It will warrant us in seizing him. So you took his horse?"

"Wal, Ginerall, I didn't do no more than *trade*. Anyhow, that's the way I look at it. I left my hoss."

"'Twasn't a good one, I reckon," said Sile, "or you wouldn't have left it."

"Guess not. It was a powerful bad hoss. Nobody but me can ride him. I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Amos had some trouble."

"This talk is idle," said the General. "How many men do you want for this service, Sergeant Staple?"

"I reckon two is enough to trap this Tory. I will take this man for one. And Tom Gigley, in Graham's rifles, will be the other. We will have him."

"Who are yew goin' tew ketch?" demanded Lige. "I ain't goin' unless I know. I'm hungry, tew."

"Joseph Amos."

"Hooray. I'll go from here tew Boston tew nab *him*. Say, *won't* he be mad! Yew orter heern that pooty gal give it tew the pizon-snake. I don't think I ever seen any one raked down that way. Let's go and eat."

"You may go," said Greene. "You have your orders. You are under his command, Mr. Pickerel; see that you do your duty."

Lige seized his lock of yellow hair, which would persist in falling into his eyes, and pulled a bow out of it. Sile saluted the General, and left the marquise.

"There's one thing sure, greeny," said Sile, when they were outside. "You hev got a bully hoss."

"I ain't much of a judge of hossflesh," said Lige, meekly. "But, I *can* cave in the head of any man that calls me a greeny. That's what I can dew."

"I didn't mean any harm, gr—Mr. Pickerel. That's a fishy name of yours."

"*Rayther!* I hadn't nothin' tew do with it. Didn't yew know that most of our fam'lies up north was named after things in water? It was my father's fault that my name is Pickerel. If yew had lived north I should have thought yewr father was a blacksmith."

"'Cause my name is Staple? G. od dee, that. Come along, I want to find Tom Gigley."

"*His* father was a wagin-maker I guess," said Lige. "I want something tew eat."

Half an hour after this conversation they left the camp, in company with a tall, dark man, who, like Sile, had been literally born in the swamp. By the time they reached the river it was dark, and, crossing, they found a solitary nook in the woods, where, lying concealed, Tom Gigley and the Yankee lay conversing, while Sile went forward alone to reconnoiter the house of Merrill. Creeping up to the windows, he could hear the sound of revelry, and raising his head cautiously he peeped through the half-closed blind at a strange scene. Five men were in the long room, whom he knew well. Not one among them but was a savage and inhuman Tory, to whom it was joy unspeakable to rob or murder a Whig. All the servants were in the room, together with Mr. Merrill and

Lizzie. The former was sitting near the window, his face wearing a troubled expression; his daughter was standing by his side, looking angrily at the ruffians, who, seated at a table, were guzzling wine and eating voraciously.

"This is not the treatment I expected from my neighbors" said Mr. Merrill.

"Mebbe not," said the spokesman of the party. "Then why don't you declare your principles, darn it? What is a man without principle? I loathe and despise such."

"So do I," said Lizzie, in a pointed manner.

"Ah-ha. So *you* are there, my sharp-tongued beauty. Now, look here. Do you know that you are the one who brought this visit on your father? Then I'll tell you that *you are*. Your tongue is too long, my beauty. Take care that some one don't cut it."

"Lizzie, Lizzie," cried Mr. Merrill, in an agony of fear for her. "Be careful what you say."

"Do you think I fear you, Gideon Beals?" said the girl, with a look of sovereign contempt. "Not I! I hope I have better blood in my veins than that. For half a penny I would tell you what I think of you, bloody-hearted ruffian that you are. I know who set you on to this, and how far you dare go in it. I know whose creatures you are; and I know, too, that the time will come when you shall rue the hour you entered this house to insult us."

"Curse her," growled one of the ruffians. "Don't let her talk. Stop her mouth."

"Oh, let her talk," said Beals. "It will all be reckoned up ag'in' her. I've counted every hard word, and every insult, and every vile name she has given us. 'Twill be a hard reckoning."

"Make her drink a toast to the king," said another of the ruffians.

"That's so," said another.

"By jingo," said Beals, "I'll do it. Pour her out a glass of wine. We have done with half-way measures in Carolina. When women talk treason, it is time to stop their mouths. Pour out the wine."

"Hold," said Merrill, in a stern tone. "Beware what you do. I hold the king's protection, and have some influence with

Cornwallis. You will do something which will recoil on your own heads."

"Shut up, you old scoundrel," harshly rejoined Beals. "You are as bad as she is, only you have cuteness enough not to talk it out. I know you are a Whig at heart. Before the war such men as we are—who didn't have so much money as you, you cursed old aristocrat—were below you. She shall drink the king's health, if I have to force it down her throat."

"She will take it. I know she will. Won't you, Lizzie? Take the glass."

The girl took the glass of wine the man had poured out, and looked him in the face.

"You want me to drink to the king, you say," said she, slowly.

"Yes. Say, 'the king, God bless him,' and drink. You must do it."

"The king," began Lizzie, looking about the circle of dark faces. "He certainly has *need* of a blessing, if any one has."

"And deserves it, too," said Beals. "None of your sharp speeches. Drink the toast."

"Any thing to oblige gentlemen who urge their claims so politely," she said. "Here it is, then. The king: confusion to him, as an imbecile dotard!"

A yell of rage burst from the lips of Beals. He made a spring at her, but she dashed the emptied wine-glass into his face, and as he staggered back, cut by the broken glass, she put her hand into her bosom and drew out something which glittered in the lamplight. It was a small, but keen-bladed knife.

"Let me see the man who dares lay a hand upon me," she said, quietly, without a tremor in her voice. The man fell back in terror, looking at the point glittering so near his throat.

"She'd do it, too," he muttered. "Put down that weepen, girl. You don't know what you may drive us to do."

"I tell you that I have no fear of you, or of such as you, Gideon Beals. Don't think to frighten me. I have said it often, and I say it again, I am a rebel, heart and soul, if to love the old State, and to hope she may be free from foreign and domestic enemies constitutes rebellion."

"Don't be skeered of a girl," said one of the men. "It don't look well. Make her drink the toast, and confusion to the enemies of the king, and do it on her knees. If you are afraid of her, I am not."

"Take hold of her then," said Beals, "and see how you like it."

The man sprung at her with a savage oath. In an instant the dagger was wrested from her weak hand, and she was struggling in the ruffian's arms. But, she had a champion. Her father had looked on in silence while no violence was offering, admiring in his heart the brave bearing of his child; but, when he saw her assailed, he leaped upon one of the rascals, snatched a pistol from his hand, and sprung upon the villain who had seized the brave girl. The fellow released his hold and fell back. Old Samuel Merrill put his daughter behind him by a single movement of his left hand, and presenting the pistol with a steady aim, said, in a tone of quiet decision, "Let me see the man who dares lay hands on her again."

"I knew it," shouted Beals. "You old traitor, I will make this a bloody day to you. Down with him."

"Stand back, I say!" repeated the old man, in ringing tones. "Let me see one among you raise a hand or weapon and he is doomed. I seek no one's blood. I never have sought it. But, to save my child from wrong I will lose the last drop of blood in these old veins."

"We will hang you to the first tree," hissed Beals. "Release the girl. I swear by all things above and below that she shall drink this toast; and if you hesitate to give her up, you are a dead man. The country is full of such men as you, who have taken the king's protection, and work against him in secret. Stand away from her."

"Never!"

"At him," cried Beals.

No man moved. Awed by that determined presence, they stopped in mute astonishment, staring at the old man, as, with white hair floating in the air, one foot advanced, the weapon leveled, he stood ready to defend his daughter from insult.

"Why don't you move?" roared Beals. "Are you cowards?"

"We follow our leader," said one of the men, angrily.

"Do it, then!" he said, leaping forward. The pistol cracked and, as the Tory reeled backward with a bullet in his brain, whirling the weapon over his head, Merrill struck down the next man, and grasping a heavy chair, stood upon his guard, desperate, but determined.

CHAPTER V.

THE OIL OF HICKORY.

AGAIN the villains paused. Such men are rarely brave, in the true meaning of the term. They have that sort of brutal courage that sometimes will enable them to fight well; but they lacked that moral strength which the old man possessed, and felt its power for a moment. Then, the fact that they had deadly weapons, and the chair was his only defense, seemed to dawn upon them, and drawing knives and pistols, they dashed upon him. As they did so there was a rattle of glass, and the body of Sile Staple appeared leaping through the window, holding in one hand a rifle, and in the other a knife. At the sight of this reinforcement they fell back, and began to parley. The one who had been knocked down by Merrill, in the first instance, having gained his feet, rejoined his companions.

"See here," said one of them, "don't let's quarrel. You've killed heads: he was the man most to blame. Let's cry quits."

"Where you go in?" said Sile. "I've got a word to say about that. What yer in here for, plunderin' an honest man?"

"Plundering! Don't say that, Sile. Mr. Merrill is a friend to our side, and when we stepped in and asked him for something to eat and drink, he gave it."

"Don't make too free with my name, Connigan; I won't stand that. You always was a pesky mean critter. Look yer. I want you to lay down your arms an' surrender."

• What for?"

"Never mind. I'll let you know that it ain't exactly the thing for men of your kind to break into a man's house this way, and insult his darter, 'specially sech a gal as Lizzie. No, don't say a word. I was lookin' through the window most all the time. I had a rifle drawed on Beas when he fell."

"But, Sile—" began Connigan.

"Mister Staple, if you please; *Sergeant* Staple, in Captain Graham's rifles. Mebbe you ain't heard of Captain Graham? It don't matter so much. I'm one of his men, and you all know me. What I say, I'll stand by. Drop your weapons, and do it quick."

"I reckon it's pooty good for one man to talk that way to four," said the spokesman. "That's *too* rich, you know."

"I'm not fool enough to come here alone. You try to go out of the door, and see how quick you git a knife up to the hilt in yer heart. Jest try it, that's all; I wouldn't advise you to do it, as a friend."

"He's got more men outside, of course. Some of Graham's rifles, I s'pose," said the man who had been knocked down.

"Speak quick, there," said Sile. "No long speeches; we don't like them. Do you surrender now, without more talk?"

"Yes."

"Then give up your weapons. Miss Lizzie, go an' git 'em."

The young girl stepped forward with alacrity and took the weapons, knives, rifles and pistols, and piled them up near the door. This done, the sergeant sent her out for some strong cords, and she bound the four rascals hand and foot. She drew a long sigh of relief the moment this was done.

"Thar, I'm glad I've got you in a safe hitch. My men wasn't close enough to do me much good. I'll git 'em now, though, and then we'll proceed to pay these rice fellows for a part of their rascality."

"What yer gwine to do?" asked the man with the broken

head. "I say, no hanging; we surrendered as prisoners of war, mind that."

"All right. We won't hang you, though nobody ever deserved it better. But, I'll write the ten commandments on your backs, every man of you. Miss Lizzie, just take a pistol and watch these chaps. If they go to stir, give it to them. Don't hesitate. I'll be back in a minnit."

Sile went away, but soon returned, accompanied by his two friends. Lige gave a queer smile as he saw the girl.

"Hello!" he cried, "how de dew? I've come again, yew see; couldn't keep away from yew, no how. Got some chaps here for me to take care on, ain't yew? Been eating here, tew."

"No fooling now, Sile Staple," said one of the prisoners, alarmed by the sight of the new-comers. "Tom Gigley, I call you to witness we surrendered as prisoners of war."

"Some of our men did the same," said Tom Gigley. "I had a brother onct. What happened him? He fell in with the Bloody Scout, and the end of it was they hung him to the fast tree. Then don't say nothin' to me, Nat Simmons; I won't b'ar it."

"Bring 'em along," said Sile. "You stay here, miss; it ain't no fit sight for you to see."

"You don't mean to kill these men, Sile? I would never forgive you if you did that."

"Kill 'em? No; but I'll so lace their hides with hick'rys that they won't lay down easy for a month. Don't say a word, now. I know you are a soft-hearted little thing, and would like me to let 'em off easier; but this is one thing I won't do for you; they've got to be licked."

"They git off durned easy, tew," said Lige; "the critters deserve to be roasted at a slow fire. It's lucky it wa'n't me that was at the winder; if I had been, darn my hide and buttons ef I wouldn't have cut 'em intew whip-lashes. Say, no hangin' back now. Don't jerk at the halter. It's a good thing I'm so awful weak in the arm, or I might hurt you some. It makes me mad to think what yew've eat."

Despite the protestations of the scoundrels, who hung back and uttered a curious jumble of threats, reproaches, and

entreaties, their captors led them out into the opening and tied them to separate trees. Having stripped off the coats and shirts of the four, Sile went into the woods, and returned with a large bundle of strong hickory switches, which he laid upon the ground.

"I'll make you sweat for this, Sile Staple," roared Simmons, in an agony of fear, as he saw that worthy sorting out the switches in four heaps. "It isn't according to the rules of war."

"I s'pose it's accordin' to the rules of war to insult wimmin an' old men, ain't it, Nat Simmons? Mebbe it is; but I don't think it; leastways, I'm goin' to treat you jest as bad as if you had done a desperate mean thing. Will you take a hand in, Uncle Sam? 'Tain't no use for you to hang back now, since you shot the Tory."

"I only ask to be allowed to deal with this man Simmons," said Merrill, savagely. "He shall have no cause to complain that I slighted *him*!"

"Don't let him!" screamed Simmons, writhing in his bonds—"don't let him touch me; he's got a spite ag'in' me because I caught hold of the gal to-night. Don't be mean, now. If I've got to be licked, let a man do it that ain't got no special spite against me."

"I guess they didn't come with this party," said Lige, looking up from the bundle of switches he was sorting. "That's the man that was goin' to make the pooty gal drink the king's health, an' drink it on her knees, was he? Give it tew him *good*, old man."

"He shall have no reason to complain of me," said the old man; "I will make him wish that he never had been born. Are you ready? I am impatient to begin."

"What a lucky number," said Sile; "jest one apiece, ain't there? I reckon these chaps will think twice before they come into old Marlboro' district ag'in, and walk into a decent man's house, without as much as saying 'by your leave.' Let's try the switches; give it to 'em!"

Every man squared himself, and the lithe rods fell upon the shoulders of the Tories together. The scene which followed baffles description. High above the rest rose the shouts of the man who was under the hands of Uncle Sam Merrill,

whose wrongs that night showed themselves in the power with which he dealt his blows. Working away with dogged pertinacity, he never looked up until Sile laid his hand upon his arm and asked him to desist. All through the scene, Lige had been enjoying himself over the suffering of the fellow under his charge. After dealing three or four blows he would pause and ask, in a tone of tender pity, if it hurt much?"

"Hurt!" roared the man; "of course it does, you livered Yankee."

"That's a hard name," said Lige; "I guess yew need a little moral suasion, don't yew? Here goes, fur good manners, yew see."

And falling upon his man again, he gave him perhaps as many more cuts, every one of which raised a white welt upon the flesh, and then paused again.

"I guess yew are laborin' under a mistake," he said; "it don't hurt yew; it's only imagination. I'm tew weak in the arms. An infant in arms could dew more than I can."

"Weak in the arms!" shrieked the sufferer; "I wish you was. Weak! You lie, you infernal rebel."

"What a temper the feller has got," said the Yankee. "Now, jest listen tew that. He says I'm a liar. I never *could* stand that. I'll hev tew give him a little more of the ile of hick'ry. Perhaps that will cure his complaint. His mouth is terrible foul now. I don't think I ever see a worser tongue. Take some more medicine!"

Here followed a dozen strokes, well laid on, which caused the swamp-sucker to roar for mercy at the top of his voice.

"What yew yeilin' about now?" said Lige, pausing again. "Yew ain't got no patience. Ever hear of Patience on a monument, smiling at Grief? Why don't yew try tew come that? Didn't nobody ever teach yew that a lickin' like this is good fur your futur' well-bein'? Then yew've been badly bring up. Now, I want tew say, that if your parents had done their duty by yew, we shouldn't see this spectacle to-night."

"I'll murder you for this," shouted the man. "See here.

If you mean to lick me any more, peg away. I ain't going to stand your talk and thrashing at the same time."

"Strange, strange! Jest see the depravity of the human heart! Now, I was tryin' tew benefit that chap—tew raise him in the moral scale of bein', so tew speak. Would a young man raised in the right atmosphere ever be guilty of 'comin' intew a house and slashin' round with knives and pistols, as yew did to-day, and then object tew bein' talked tew? A little more of the ile of hickory will jest suit your complaint tew a dot. I'll apply it."

Again falling upon his victim with great zeal, he gave him such a basting as the rascal had never seen given to a "nigger," pausing now and then to speak of the weakness of his arms, and to express his sorrow that he was not able to do the subject more justice. The flogging was over at last, and the men were loosened. The punishment had been severe, but it must be remembered that it was lenient compared with the tortures almost uniformly heaped upon the Whigs who fell into the hands of the suckers in British service. Death was the least they could expect in such a case—death by hanging. Groaning with pain, the vagabonds were allowed to go to the river, and wash their wounded backs, before resuming their garments.

"We have taught you a lesson which you will not be likely to forget, Nat Simmons. You and your gang must b'ar it in mind. We've let you off easy. We *ought* to hang you, and if I had my will, I'd do it now. The most we kin do is to find a hiding-place for you, and take you to Greene's army to-morrow."

"You know me, Sile," said Nat Simmons, never raising his dark face. "I never forgit such little things as these."

"Obleeged to you, Nat. Then the lesson is a good one. I didn't think you'd forgit in a hurry; but, I didn't count on your rememberin' it always. That's good."

"Will yew remember *me* when yew see me again?" asked Lige, turning to the unfortunate subject of his recent missionary work.

"Let me ever meet you where I have a chance, and we shall see," replied the man.

"Hopeful converts these! I s'pose you think alike. Any

way, Tom Gigley's man yelled loud enough. As for Mr. Simmons', he was in tough hands. The old man used up four switches on him; durned ef he didn't."

"And sarved him right," said Sile. "Where can we put these beauties, Uncle Sam?"

"Gag them and take them into my wine-cellar. When Lee comes along to-morrow, or whoever has the rear, we can give them up."

"That's right; and then you will put your gold and silver in a bag and start with them for Greene's army, for there is no longer any safety for you in Marlboro'. The only thing for you to do is to take a commission and fight, as you know how. I won't stand no talk. You know how it will be if you stay. You will never be safe."

"But, my daughter," groaned the old man. "I should not have killed Beals but for her sake. I couldn't help it. You could see that, Sile. The man forced it on me. I tried to get the madman to understand he was rushing on his fate."

"And sarved him right," said Sile. "You can't do any good here. The gal would be safer without you than with you. She might stay here a while, and if the district got too hot for her, she might go to any one of the towns."

"I fear to do that. She is a resolute and spirited girl, and will certainly do or say something which will bring the wrath of the British on her defenseless head. They are not above oppressing a woman, if she is too outspoken."

"That's true," said Sile. "But, you must b'ar in mind one thing. She's handsome as a doll. Now, that makes a difference. A man can do and say mean things to a scrawny old maid, or to a widder fifty or sixty years old; but, when it comes to young and handsome gals, it can't be done. No man has the cheek."

"Mister," said Lige. "Yew speak my sentiments. Now, there was an old brud up tew Salem, the durnedest critter yew ever did see. She had a nose on her about five inches long, built like a spike—the wust nose ever tacked on tew a woman. An' that wa'n't all. She had a tongue that never stopped, until they planted her. If she hadn't been so darned obstinate, she might 'a been a-livin' now, but folks said she wa'n't goin' tew die, an' jest tew spite 'em, an' show

'em that she'd die if she wanted tew, she jst stopped breathin'. Now, there wa'n't no meanness that was possible, which that woman wa'n't ekal to. The only pleasant thing she did was tew die, an' the town committee met, and passed a vote of thanks tew her on the spot."

"Then the lady was not popular," said Mr. Merrill, smiling, in spite of his uneasiness.

"Popular! Yew bet your life she wa'n't! Yew see, on account of the pattern of that nose, she kept stickin' it right intew other people's business. She couldn't help it. Lord, it was natur', that was!"

"'Twas so, said Sile. "I've seen a powerful heap of sech, I reckon. That's a female lives on the north bank of Elisto that's got jst sech a nose and jst sech a tongue, for all the world. But, this ain't a time to discuss the matter. Let's get these beauties under kiver."

Driving their prisoners before them, they reached the house. Lizzie sat upon the verandah, waiting for them. The prisoners cast looks of hatred at her as they passed. It was evident that they regarded her as the cause of their capture. In a few moments they were driven into the wine-vault, their legs firmly bound, and the door locked and barred. This done, the party went up-stairs. The body of Beals lay where it had fallen. Tom Gigley and Sile took it up and carried it out to the river-bank. There they dug a grave, and laid the slain Tory in it, only thinking that he had deserved his fate.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO GOOD GAMES.

WHEN every trace of the late strife had been removed, and the family was quiet, Sile and his companions again took up their quarters in their hiding-place by the river. Sile had one bad habit. He could not resist the temptation of a pack of cards. Visions of "penny ante" and "old sledge" always entranced him. Seated on a log in the midst of an

Impervious swamp, he had coolly gambled away thousands of dollars in Continental currency, enough, at the par value, to have bought one of the best plantations in the Chesterfield district, but, as depreciated, worth about ten dollars. Once in the woods, he formed a place where the full moon's rays gleamed brightly, and, drawing a greasy and thumbed pack of cards from his pocket, invited the two others to a game of "old sledge."

"Oh, git out, now," said Lige. "I ain't goin' tew los *my* money at no game I don't know nothing about."

"Ah, what of that?" rejoined Sile, shuffling his cards. "It won't take long to learn, I reckon; and when you *do* learn, you kin do as well as any one. Try onct."

"I don't keer if I dew. I seen some men playin' one day, in Morgan's camp, and one o' 'em won about forty thousand dollars."

Let not the reader be surprised at the amount. The men often bet thousands on their games, and if they won, could not have bought a decent suit of clothes with the proceeds!

"Keerds," said Lige, looking at them as Sile shuffled them "ain't very much thought of in Massachusetts. The deacons say they ain't Christian weepens. I think so tew, but, when a man has worked or fought hard, he likes a little pleasure, and it is rayther nice tew sit down and take a hand at old sledge. Now, if I play wrong, yew ought tew tell me."

"Oh, you kin learn. It ain't much. See. I deal three to you, three to Tom, three to myself. That makes six apiece. Then, I turn a keerd. It's a tew spot, hearts. That's the trump."

"Jess so," said Sile, "and the man that holds the most of the picters gits the best. That much I understand, as what fool wouldn't? Who plays first?"

"You do."

"Then there's the ace of hearts. I guess I may as well send it round once. That caught your queen, didn't it? That's good! There's the king. Why! Darned ef that didn't bring the pack! That counts for me, don't it?"

"Caught my jack!" cried Sile. "But, you ain't got every thing. I play the tray fur low."

"Wal, I guess the deuce goes a spot lower, don't it?"

drawled Lige. That's high, low, jack. Now if I only can git game."

It is needless to follow the game to its close. Suffice it to say, that when morning broke, the men were still squatted upon the log. Above them smoked and flared a pine-torch, which they had lighted when the moon went down. Absorbed in the game, they had forgotten to put out the torch. Lige had used his time so well that a huge pile of Continental currency, together with five sovereigns in gold, were in his possession, and, as the sun rose, he raked in the last money possessed by either of the others.

"Never was in sech luck in the world," said Sile, with a look of dismay.

"Never had the keerds run so before, did you, stranger?" asked Tom Gigley.

"Never," replied Lige. "It beats all natur'. Why, I ain't won all your money, hev I?"

"It looks a good deal like it," said Tom, grimly. "I ain't got a bit. I don't believe that Sile has either. Have you, old boy?"

"Not a penny," groaned Sile. "Fourteen hundred dollars in Continentals, three sovereigns in money, and my knife."

"I've lost twelve hundred in paper, two guineas, and my rifle. But, he kain't have the rifle."

"I don't want rifle or knife," said Lige. "Darn it. I ain't so mean as that. I couldn't take away the arms of a comrade, yew know. Hadn't yew better git started, Sile? It's about time to meet the Tory."

"Come on," said Sile. "Keep me in sight, and I'll be sure to take him to a place where you can hide close to us. When I take off my cap and throw it on the ground, *that's* your time to rush in and seize him."

"We mustn't hurt the darned skunk, I suppose. I hit him a lick over the head the other day, and perwided myself with a hoss. It was a good one. I don't think that the one I left was as good; I don't, really. Bat, when a man *understood* the hoss I left, he might take considerble pleasure in his society."

"Wasn't your horse a crep-eared roan, with a slim neck and spider legs?" said Sile.

"That's a term of reproach, that is. My hoss might have been a trifle thin in the legs and neck, but when yew say spider-legs, yew use a term which I feel bound to take exception tew. That hoss warn't no spider-legs."

"Wal, he was thin, wa'n't he?"

"Yes. He was *rayther* thin, I must say," assented Lige.

"Thin as a knife-blade, perhaps? Then I know *whar* he is. When I was looking for Tom Gigley in camp, I saw the boys foolin' round a quadruped of that kind, and after the darned brute had nearly kicked the brains out of one of them, Pete Navin shot him; and that's the end of *him*."

"What name did you call that chap," asked Lige.

"Pete Navin."

"What regiment is he in?"

"Graham's rifles."

"All right! If ever I meet Pete Navin, of Graham's rifles, I'll lick him out of his bewts. That's as good as sworn tew. I'll make him wish he hadn't shot *my* hoss. Now, go along and show the way."

Sile walked out upon the river-bank and looked toward the ford. The other two kept out of sight. They had not long to wait. In a few moments Joseph Amos appeared on the other side, mounted upon a fine animal, and began to cross the stream. As his horse sprung out of the water he saw Sile, and came forward quickly.

"Glad to see you, Silas; very glad indeed. You are a man of your word, I see. How long have you been here?"

"Mout be five minutes, more or less."

"I am glad I did not keep you waiting. I met with a misfortune yesterday and lost my horse. I was obliged to go up to Cheraw and get another. You did not meet a tall, Yankeeified-looking fellow riding a horse like mine, did you?"

"Yes I did; yesterday. He was the greenest lookin' coot I ever see. I mistrusted that man. I seed he looked like a thief, but I wa'n't sure. I couldn't go up to him and say that he *had* stole a 'boss, and I knew it, 'cause I didn't; but I thought he *was* a thief, and now I know it."

Of course this specch was meant to reach the ears of the Yankee, who, lying under the bushes, made ireful gestures at the head of the scout, expressive of a desire to punch it.

"Can you imagine where the white-livered Puritan went to?" asked Amos.

"Couldn't say. He's a tradin' Yankee. I think he has gone to Greene. But I don't know for sartin. He ain't no 'count anyhow. Poor shucks of a feller, I think."

"Now to business," said Amos. "I am about to trust you. Perhaps you do not know that the men of this district have determined to do something in the cause of the king. I am their acknowledge leader. We will make the country too hot for the Whigs. You, and such men as you, suit me best. You know the country like a book, and we can depend upon you in case of fighting. I offer you what many men are anxious to obtain, the office of lieutenant of scouts. At least, such is my desire. As for pay, the king is liberal to his officers."

"And he gives the men monkey's allowance—more kicks than halfpence," said Sile.

"That need not trouble us," said Amos, smiling. "We know well enough that the ordinary line of men, who are foolish enough to fight for thirteen pence a-day, deserve no better payment, for they have no higher aspirations."

"And how mout it be that you offer *me* a commission? I'm a rough man, you know. I ain't got no education, neither. I wouldn't shine in sech society as your'n. I don't know how it is, but it don't seem right."

"What don't seem right?" demanded Amos.

"For a man to take pay from the king to fight ag'in' old Car'lina. I can't make it right, somehow. I'd like to be showed how I'm wrong. I've been thinkin' about it a great deal lately. Now I was born and bred here in Car'lina, most of the time in Chesterfield, and I think a man like that can't fight ag'in' the State, and do right."

"I don't ask you to fight against her. I claim that the man who aids the king in putting down this infamous rebellion, so far from fighting against his own colony, simply aids in raising her from the condition of a rebellious to that of a loyal colony. Then how can he be said to act against her, ~~when~~ he is working for her good."

"And you offer me a commission?" said Sile.

"Yea."

"I suppose you know I've fount on the side of the rebels," said Sile. "I can't help it, but it's true."

"Never mind that. It is forgiven you. I offer this in good faith, and I will make a man of you. Is it not better now that a person of your understanding should fight for his king, than to follow a set of ragged rascals through the country from swamp to river?"

"Do you know any of the men you call ragged rascals?"

"Know them? Were not many of them raised in this section? And do I not know all the first families in the colony?"

"They were not ragged rascals in those days?" said Sile.

"Not they! You knew them too, and have shown them the deer-licks, and the paths where the buck was sure to come. Do you remember the time when Pickens, Henry Lee, Graham and myself lay all night at the great pond and killed the buck with the seven prongs?"

"Those were happy days. You were boon companions then. I remember that Captain Graham and you slept in the same blanket."

"And now I only ask a fair chance to cut his throat. I half believe he was my rival, even in those days. Do you know whether he ever comes to Merrill's now?"

"Not often. The red-coats have had it their own way too long in old Marlboro' for that. But, he comes when he kin."

"Curse him. Did you ever see him with Lizzie?"

"Once in a while. Charles Graham is a brave officer, and a man to make a woman love him. You know he was always the same—handsome, light-hearted, brave as a lion, true as steel. That's the sort for a Carolina woman, any day?"

"I believe you are saying this to make me angry. Do you think he loves Lizzie Merrill?"

"How kin he help it? Everybody loves her! But, if you ask me whether he means to marry her, I say he stands the best chance of any man in Marlboro'."

"I will cut his throat."

"Mebbe he moat object? He always *was* set in his way. I remember the time he pulled you off your horse for sayin' a slighting word of a girl in Cheraw, and made you take it back."

"Don't refer to it again. It makes me angry when I think that so long a time has passed, and I have never revenged that insult. Oh, let me meet him once in battle, sword to sword, and he shall rue the day he laid hands upon me, because I chose to speak of a woman in terms he did not like."

"He would have licked you if you didn't take it back. You know it *wasn't* true."

"What of that? Who made him her champion? She was only the daughter of a swamp-sucker—pretty enough, to be sure, but of low birth. She was honored in being spoken of at all."

"Take heed," said Sile. "Remember that I am a swamp-sucker too, and I stand up for my kind. I know that gal you spoke of was as honest as she was good. Do you deny it?"

"Certainly not. I should not have spoken of her as I did, but I was out with a company of young men, and they were boasting of their conquests, and what could I do?"

"So you sullied the fair name of a good gal, the wife of an honest man now? Don't do it again. I won't stand it," said Sile.

"I beg your pardon, Sile. I should not have said what I did. The girl was good enough, I have no doubt. But, let that pass. Speak of the object of our meeting. Do you accept my offer?"

"A lieutenant, you said?"

"Yes. I can get you a commission. I have enough influence for that. What do you say?"

"Say. I say that a man that tempts an honest fellow to do wrong, deserves what you will get. There!"

With these words he took off his leather cap and dashed it on the ground. As he did so the two hidden men suddenly threw themselves upon the young Tory and pulled him from his horse. His struggles were ineffectual. In two minutes he was securely bound, and lay upon his back on the ground. The first face he saw was that of Lige.

"You cursed Yankee bound," he roared. "I might have known you would be in it. Look out what you do, or you will lay up a heavy reckoning against yourself."

"Easy, capt'in; easy," said Lige, with a threatening look.

"Don't git mad; there ain't no use in *that*, yew know. Take life as it comes. Now, I ain't tew blame any more than the rest, though I must say I'm all-fired glad that we cotched yew."

"Set me at liberty," said Amos.

"Eh?"

"Release me on the spot. What business have you to detain a citizen against his will?"

"Hold on, young man, *hold* on; don't go to say that yew have got so bad an opinion of our common sense as *that*! It ain't possible, yew know. We took tew much trouble tew catch yew, don't yew see, tew let yew go now. I guess yew'll have tew make up yeur mind tew stay a spell. Fact is, Greene wnts tew see yew bad, and as yew didn't have the politeness tew call on him, he sent us tew ask if yew wouldn't have the kindness tew give him a visit; and, in order tew make sure that yew complied wth his request, we'll jest take yew along with us."

"Do you mean to keep me a prisoner, Sile Staple?" demanded Amos.

"I rather reckon we *do*! That's a right smart guess you made," replied Sile.

"Then this was a game to catch me?"

"Jess so, Mister Tory," said Lige; "a darned good game it makes cout tew be—better'n ad sledge, with a winning wand every time."

In spite of Amos' protestation they put him on his horse, and moved off toward the house. It did not take long to put him in the companionship of his compatriots in the wine-vault. This was hardly done when the sound of a bugle warned them that a troop of horse—of which they did not know—was near at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

GRAHAM'S RIFLES.

ALL but Sile remained on the cellar stairs, waiting to see what troop was at hand. That worthy, darting to a window, and catching sight of the horsemen at the ford, shouted to his companions to go down and gag the prisoners. They obeyed precipitately, and Sile followed them into the cellar, closing the door after him. He had but one word to explain the movement, and that word was, "*Reg'lars!*"

The Yankee and Tom Gigley had done their work quickly and well. The hilt of a knife or the barrel of a pistol had been thrust into the mouth of each prisoner, making an outcry impossible. Lizzie and her father stood upon the verandah, watching the approaching troop. Only a few of them had crossed the stream, and these were falling into line upon the bank, waiting for their companions. One by one they straggled through, their accouterments gleaming in the sun's rays. They numbered about forty men, of the British regular cavalry. Their horses were, on the whole, a poor lot; it was in this respect that they failed as compared with the horsemen of the south, who always found means to substitute new animals for their jaded beasts—a change which the regulars found it almost impossible to effect.

When all had crossed the stream, the bugle again sounded, and the party came on at a slow trot. At their head rode a man well known in that section as a dashing and spirited officer, brave even to recklessness. This was "Mad Archy Campbell;" he was at this time a major, and dressed even to the extreme of foppishness; but, any failing he had in dress was atoned for by bravery in the field. He wore his hair long, and had dark-blue eyes, which sparkled like fire in the ardor of battle.

As the head of the dragoons came up, the major performed a courtly salute to Lizzie, whom he had known at Charleston.

"I cry your mercy," he said, "for coming upon you with sword and spear, but the times must plead my excuse. The rough-riders of the south make such work imperative."

The young girl returned his salute courteously, though trembling for her friends in the cellar.

"What especially brings you to this section major?" she said.

"Your rebel friends," said Mad Archy. "I give them credit for being enterprising fellows. I thought we had ended them at Camden; but it seems not. At least, here we are upon the war-path again."

"Are you hurried, major?"

"If I was not I could not pass this door. We are in pursuit of a troop of rifles who persist in giving us trouble. Captain Graham leads them; if I catch him, I will have him, or make him a major at my expense. Have you seen any troops?"

The maid could not repress a smile.

"Ah, I understand you, little rebel that you are. You would not tell me if you knew; but, let it pass, I must push on. They rode by here sometime last night; we must do something to take the conceit out of them after the defeat of Tarleton at Cowpens."

"Can I offer you any refreshments, major?" said Mr. Merrill.

"I'll take a glass of wine, if you will have it brought out to me," replied Campbell.

"James," said Mr. Merrill, "bring out a bottle of Madeira and glasses."

The servant hurried away, and quickly returned with the wine.

"Your health, Miss Merrill; yours, sir," said the major, raising the glass to his lips.

As he did so, his eye caught the glitter of steel in an adjacent thicket, and dashing down the glass, he shouted to the men to form, and draw their sabers. Directly in front, a body of horse were filing slowly from the thicket. A glance showed Merrill that they were Continental troops.

"Into the house, Miss Merrill!" shouted Campbell; "you"

are not safe here. These fellows mean business. First blood, boys. Charge !”

The dragoons advanced at a gallop, closely following their leader. The Americans uttered a wild battle-cry, and setting spurs to their horses, charged in turn. Campbell's troops fell back in some disorder into a thicket by the wayside, impervious to cavalry.

“I won't stay here !” cried Campbell. “Try them again, boys.”

The moment the dragoons appeared, the rides of the Americans began to play upon them with deadly effect. Campbell was furious with rage, but the men would not stand up to it, and he began to retire through the woods, aiming to reach the ford. The Americans had dismounted, preparatory to forcing a passage through the brush with their rifles ; but, when they saw the enemy on the retreat, they again mounted and dashed up within easy range, where they could fire into the thicket, while, at the same time, they were safe from the British carbines. As the Americans passed the house in pursuit, the leader turned in his saddle and kissed his hand to Lizzie, who stood in an open window in the upper part of the dwelling. The rebel captain was a strongly-built young fellow, with a handsome face, and long, curling hair, falling on his shoulders. She returned the salute, and, bending from the window, called to him. He rode up within speaking distance.

“I am in haste, darling,” he said. “We must send this fellow back to Cornwallis with his plumage soiled.”

“But you will be careful for my sake, dear Charles,” said the girl.

“I will ; for your sake I would do any thing. I will return to you when the skirmish is over ; until then, good-by, and God bless you.”

He put spurs to his horse and galloped away. The maiden leaned far out from the window, and watched his progress with glowing cheeks and parted lips. They had not spoken loudly, but Samuel Merrill had heard them, and his face lighted up with a smile of happiness.

“Thank God !” he murmured, “there will be some one to care for my darling when I am gone.”

Sullen but still formidable, the British dragoons led their

horses through the woods, pausing now and then to pour in fire from their carbines to check the too near approach of their enemies. They reached the river at last, and began to cross. And now the real struggle commenced. The Americans scattered themselves through the bushes along the bank of the stream, and shot down the dragoons as they entered it. The water soon ran purple with their blood. Of the forty men whom Archy Campbell had led across the river not ten minutes before, but twelve reached the other side.

"I say, Morten," said Campbell, to one of his officers, as they struggled up the bank on the other side, "we are whipped!"

"So it seems," growled that officer. "The devil! Who expected to see *them* so soon? But, did you see that officer kiss his hand to the Merrill girl? And she returned it; ten to one she baited that *trap* for us."

"Done!" said Archy. "She knew nothing about it; but it makes me mad to think she should be looking on while we were getting dressed down so handsomely. I suppose these are the men we came out to catch?"

"Yes; Graham's rifles; I know the corps badge. Did you notice their horses?"

"I noticed that our men ran like the devil," replied Archy. "How Belfour will foam when he hears of it. You are witness that they outnumbered us."

"They did not have a man more than we. They have got more now, it seems. But their horses, man! With a regiment mounted on such beasts, I will engage to ride from Charleston to New York," said the officer.

"We haven't got them. Fall in, you fellows. Rather thin muster! Let's get out of this. Trot! I'll come back and see that Graham again."

Whiz! A rifle-ball sung close by the head of the speaker and passed through the brains of a man just in front. He fell from his saddle, dead before he touched the ground.

"Dead!" asked Campbell, bending forward.

"Stone dead, sir," said one of the men, saluting.

"Bring his horse along. Forward; quick time; trot!" was the unfeeling order.

The small party rode away hastily, leaving Graham master

of the field. Dividing his men, he sent thirty of them in pursuit of Campbell, with orders to meet him at a point he named, and turned back with the rest. Leaving this squad to bury the dead and care for the wounded, he entered the house. Lizzie met him in the hall. They had been betrothed for a year, but had kept the secret well. There was no reserve on her part, but raising her lips to his, she took and gave back his lover's kiss.

"You have done nobly," said she. "You have deserved well of your country. This man whom you have beaten was one of the best of the invaders, and yet, I was glad to see him on the run. How came you here?"

"Greene ordered me through this section, partly at my own request, and partly to see after a rebel force said to be gathering in the vicinity. If my information is correct, my former friend, Joseph Amos, is at work raising a band of royalists. Let him look to his safety! He will find himself in close quarters before he fairly knows his danger. Have you seen Silo Staple?"

"He is here now. He ran out when you charged the enemy, and has not come back. Ah! there he is. He has been fighting."

The worthy scout was seen coming toward the house on the run, holding his rifle on a trail. He dropped the weapon when he saw Graham, and held out his hand.

"Shake, capt'in! Glad to see you. I've got some beauties for you to take keer of."

"Where are they?"

"In the cellar. There's two of them deserve hangin' if ever men deserved it. I'd like a pull at the rope, myself. And as for Joe Amos—"

"Have you caught him?" demanded Graham, eagerly. "If you have, I will make it worth your labor."

"Don't talk pay to me, now, capt'in," said Silo. "I ain't workin' for pay, this trip, though that durned Yankee did clean me out of every rag of money I had, last night. Now, I ask you, is it fair for a man to let on he kain't play old sledge a bit, an' then turn out to be one of the best players you ever see?"

"Danged if I could help it," drawled Lige, who had just

come up the cellar stairs, accompanied by Tom Gigley. "The keards *would* run that way, spite of all I could dew. They hadn't orter blame me. Say, capt'in. Hadn't yew better take them pris'ners an' go? Mad Archy won't wait long when he meets Cornwallis. He'll be after yew with a sharp stick."

"You are right, my man, though you have a strange way of expressing yourself. We will ride at once. Bring up your prisoners, Sile. Make haste."

They went into the wine-vault and brought out the five men. Amos looked crestfallen and angry. Graham was too brave a man to say a word to annoy a fallen foe, and simply ordered the troopers to take the captives into the open air. The look which Amos cast at Lizzie haunted her for days.

"You are to come with me," said Graham, speaking to Sile. "Greene ordered me to pick you up. Your companions are mounted?"

"Yes, capt'in," replied Sile.

"Then take your places in the line."

They obeyed. As the cavalcade began to move off, Samuel Merrill spoke to Charles and called him aside.

"Tell Singleton and Marion, when you see them, that in a few days I will join them. It is time I did something for the cause."

Charles pressed the old man's hand and rode away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDNIGHT MEETING.

NEARLY a month had passed since Mad Archy was driven across the river by Charles Graham. Greene, pursued by the combined forces of the enemy, had joined his command with that of Morgan, and placed the Dan between himself and their pursuing legions. During this time Lizzie Merrill had lived alone, seldom leaving the house, and receiving few visitors. Parties of Tories and British passed up and down,

But offered her no molestation, for it was not yet generally known that her father had thrown up the "protection" he had received, and joined the army of defenders on the north bank of the Dan.

Sitting on the verandah in the cool evening, with her elbow on the rail and her head resting on her hand, the beautiful girl was thinking of the time when there should be peace in the land, and when father, lover and friends should be home again. In that dream-like state, she was scarcely conscious that a horseman was approaching, until some one spoke to her.

"I give you good evening, Miss Lizzie."

She looked up with a start. Joseph Amos was seated in his saddle, looking at her with a strange expression on his dark, handsome face. Love and hate seemed strangely blended there.

"Joseph Amos! I thought—"

"You thought I was still in the hands of your worthy friends, the rebels. Thank *you*. I did not like their society, and begged leave to bid them good-by. In other words, I took advantage of a weak window, and a drowsy sentinel, and left them. You are very glad to see me."

"I am *not*," replied the maid, decisively.

"You are honest, it seems. Why am I so hateful in your eyes?"

"Must I tell you that again? Will you never understand that no Carolina man can ever be my friend who draws the sword in the service of the enemies of his country? You are either willfully obtuse, or you seek to annoy me."

"Pardon me. I did not think of that. But it is necessary that you and I should understand each other. I have made up my mind to marry you. Of course you will need time to prepare for the event. Two weeks ought to be enough. You shall have that time."

"For what?" she demanded, with lightened color.

"To prepare for your wedding. Or, perhaps you do not need so much time. In that case, you will find me complaisant. But, more time I can not give. My men are waiting for my coming, and when we are ready, woe to the region about Cheraw."

"You surely do not mean to insult me? This is no time to jest. I am alone. My father is far away. Do you think it manly to oppress a woman?"

"Your father is on the Dan. I have kept the fact from the men as long as I could, for they have no good feeling toward you, since Beals was killed in this house. You would do well to remain quiet. It would need but little on your part to light the torch which would sweep this plantation from end to end."

"Why do you come here?"

"I came to acquaint you with my determination," replied the young man, coolly. "You are to be my wife. Do not let any sickly regard for Charles Graham make you hesitate. You shall never marry him. If you dare so much as express a liking for him, I will seek him, though in the midst of his dragoons, and cut his throat."

"Fool!" cried the now thoroughly aroused maid. "Coward! You dare to threaten *him*, a man who is as far above you as heaven is above earth! Do you taunt me with my regard for him? I love him dearly. I am to be his wife. Nothing else would have made me say it, but I value his little finger more than your whole body. Are you satisfied *now*?"

"Very well. I expected you to fly out; but I have learned to control my temper. Of course you would say all that. It makes no difference. I will marry you just the same."

"You talk of doing Charles an injury in the open face of day, Joseph Amos. You? Why you fear him like death! Go to him; seek him if you *dare*, and I will trust him to give a good account of you, wretch that you are."

"You call me choice names," said he, the faintest tinge of anger showing itself in his tones. "But, it does not matter. I will stay here to-night. James?"

The negro came at the call.

"You will send Neddy to take care of my horse, and rub him down well. I stay here to-night. Let me have something to eat as soon as possible. A bottle of Madeira, James. And, perhaps it would be as well to add a glass of sherry, for an appetizer."

Lizzie looked at the speaker in the utmost surprise, and was forced to admit that, in temper, he was more than a match

for her. James bowed, and retired to execute the order given. Neddy came out and took the horse, grinning broadly.

"What are you laughing at, you young imp?" said Joseph.

"I t'ink massa bring good many loss hyah. Yah! Rebe. git 'em all. S'pose dey t'ief dis one, too?"

"If they do I will cut your ears off close to your head, you young rascal. I've lost two of the best horses in Carolina on this plantation already, and don't propose to lose another. Remember, if you are so foolish as to lose *that* horse, your ears shall answer it. But, thank heaven, there are no armed rebels in Marlboro' now."

Neddy led the horse to the stable, feeling of his ears, and, grumbling that, "Massa Jee t'ink a nigger ain't got no feelin', w'en he talk about cut off he year. W'ats a nigger do wid-out he year? Nebber can yearry massa w'en he call."

James set out a cold supper for the Tory in the dining-room, and then called him in. Amos sat so long over his wine that it was quite dark when he came out. Lizzie was still seated on the verandah, but her head had dropped upon her clasped hands, and she was weeping. He sprung forward and fell on his knees by her chair.

"Lizzie, Lizzie, look up! Speak to me; I have been cruel to you. I acknowledge it, but remember you drove me to it by your obstinacy."

"You have some grace left, it seems," she said, bitterly. "You feel my distress?"

"Try me," he said. "You do not know how I love you. Night and day I am dreaming of you. When you were a little child, and I another, I thought there was no face like yours in the whole earth. If I leave the service in which I am now engaged, *will* you love me?"

"You ask too much," she said. "I could *not* love you well enough for that. What you do, do it for the country. There is nothing so noble as to do good from noble motives, and not from self-interest. I am truly sorry you love me, as I must believe you do. There are many worthy women in the country who will be proud to marry you, if you are on the true side. But, you know why I can not."

"No need to remind me of that," he said, rising in anger. "Then I say you *shall* marry me, and that Charles Graham

shall never see your face, except as my wife. My mind was made up to this before, but I forgot my purpose when I saw you in tears. I forgot that tears are woman's weapons, and right well she knows how to use them. Take this lesson to heart: whatever happens, you are to be my wife."

"I never will be. I would kill myself with my own hands," she replied, "before I would take your name."

"All very good. You shall be tried. But, I am weary. The prisons of Greene did not suit me, and I must rest. James, show me to my room. Give you good-night, my darling."

She flashed a fierce glance at him from her black eyes, at which he laughed lightly as he retired. Scarcely had his foot ceased to sound upon the stairs, when a dark form rose suddenly above the rail of the piazza and laid a hand upon her mouth to keep down the scream which rose to her lips.

"Keep still!" he said. "It's me, Sile Staple."

"How came you here?" she whispered.

"Hush. Who have you got in the house?"

"Joseph Amos," was the reply.

"The durned skunk got away. I've been after him ever sence, but he was too quick for me. I hadn't the nag under me what he had. Whar does he sleep?"

"In a room at the back of the house. He can not hear us."

"He mout come down to listen. It's in the natur' of a Tory to sneak. Come out under the trees."

She followed him silently until they reached a spot where they were safe from eavesdroppers.

"Greene has turned on Cornwallis. I s'pose you heerd," said Sile. "Anyway, he will soon. Cornwallis didn't stay long at Hillsboro'. The kentry was too hot for him, and for all he thought himself so smart, he didn't dare to cross the Dan."

"Where is Charles?" she asked.

"Oh, he's with Lee now. You know him, don't you—Harry Lee, of the Legion? 'Legion Harry,' we call him. They'll be down here in a few days. You jest keep cool."

"Oh, Sile," she said. "This man has threatened me in a way you can have no conception of. He says I shall be his wife."

"Tell him no," said Sile.

"I did; but, he says that makes no difference. I am afraid of him. See my father, see Charles, and tell them I am in danger. When the Tory finds that he can not bend me to his purpose, I can not tell what evil he may do."

"Darn him! Let me git at him. The man that won't listen to a woman when she tells him she don't want him, deserves a lickin'. I'll do the business for him, too. Jest let me go up to his room. I'll fix his flint. Come. I'll go now."

"You must do nothing of the kind. What are you thinking of? Would you betray your presence here to *him*?"

"I would like to punch his head once, jest for luck," said Sile. "I don't know any thing would suit me better. Let me go up and punch him."

"You would be very impudent to think of that. Why did you come?"

"I follered him when he cleared out. The British rogue worked a bar out of the winder, dropped out while the sentry's back was turned, and got away. I ain't been fur behind, but he got a day the start. One of them chaps we took with him come on faster than he did, and perhaps they know he's got away."

"What do you mean to do?"

"I mean to find out where he is camped, and when we do, I reckon Legion Harry will make them pooty sick. If we git him ag'in, you needn't have no fear of his troubling you any more. Now, mark my words: they ain't camped fur from here, and he is goin' to find them. He'll go to night, and when he goes, I foller."

"I will go too."

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"You kain't do that. I've got reasons ag'in' it. Good reasons, too. The captain will be here afore morning, and you will want to see him."

Lizzie blushed.

"Yes, I must see him. And my father, is he well? Does he bear the fatigues of camp-life?"

"Like an old hero, as he is. The men all love him. Thar

ain't a man in the division, I say it boldly, that don't know an' love him. He's a kind of volunteer aid to the General. Greene's like the rest, kain't make too much of the old man, nohow."

"Will he come, too?" asked the girl, eagerly, clasping her hands.

"I tell you Greene is goin' to turn on the inimy. He ain't the man to stay forever on the other side of the Dan. It ain't his way. So look out for him in Chesterfield and Marlboro' before long."

"What will you do now? Are you alone?"

"Jest now, but I've got comrades as promised to meet me here about to-morrer."

"Do I know them?"

"Tom Gibley and the Yank. 'Tain't often I care for a Yank, but this un' ain't like the ord'nary run of that sort of critter. To be sure he wins my money, but that ain't much. I kin stand it. Go into the house, and leave me to watch. I'll engage that the capt'in will leave his room before long."

She went into the house, while the scout sunk down in the shadow, to await developments.

CHAPTER IX.

"UP A STUMP."

HE had not a great while to wait. Perhaps an hour had passed, when Amos came carefully out of the front door, closing it behind him without noise.

She rose, and peeped out of the cover. There was a bright moon, and he could see that his face was stern and savage. His last interview with the defiant girl rendered it quite apparent that there was but one way to possess her, and that was by force. Force he was determined to use.

"Rides rather rusty," muttered Sile. Which, being interpreted, means "looks very angry." "I reckon I'll follow, if it's all the same to you."

He suited the action to the word. Had the Tory looked behind him, he would have seen a dark form gliding after like a shadow, halting whenever he did, and dropping out of sight whenever he looked around. But, only once or twice did he look back, and shake his hand at the house, still to be seen in the moonlight.

"I'll make you rue the day," he thought, "when you dared to refuse me."

The Tory strode on at a quick pace, which made Sile step out in order to keep up with him. The scout was an adept at the business, and seemed to know by instinct when the man he followed was about to turn. His step woke no echo in the woods; his moccasins fell like feathers. No sound was heard save the footfall of Amos, and the whirr of bats and dusky birds of night, flitting away at his coming. He led Sile by a tangled and dangerous path. Through swamps where the damp moss hung from the swinging boughs, and where slimy snakes lay on the tussocks; by dark, unwholesome pools; through seemingly impenetrable thickets, until a murmur of voices fell upon his ears, and he was conscious that they were approaching some camp.

It now behooved the scout to be cautious. Crawling up with absolutely noiseless steps, Sile looked into the Tory rendezvous. It was a little opening in the forest, surrounded by lofty trees. Horses were picketed on all sides, to the number of a hundred. The men were grouped about on the grass in various attitudes, some playing cards, some talking in a loud tone. Sile knew them. Cut-throats, thieves and vagabonds were in that band—the offscouring of North and South Carolina. Gallows was written on many a face. Stowching, dark-bearded, desperate fellows played interminable games of cards, breathing low curses when their money was swept from the board by some more fortunate player. As Sile peered into the camp, there was a sudden commotion in the group nearest him. Joseph had passed at the edge of the woods and was looking at them in silence. A burly ruffian sprang up, and dashed his cards in the face of the man with whom he was playing, a small fellow, with a white, almost expressionless countenance, but with a cruel eye. The insulted man rose slowly.

"*Cheat!*" shouted the ruffian.

"Cheat, Bill Epps," said the other, coolly. "Take ~~keer~~ I'm a man that will b'ar a great deal, but that is too much, you know. Cheat won't do; take it back."

"Never! You are a cheat and a liar. Take it back? Take it up, if you dare!"

"You have called me cheat and liar," said the small man in a hushed voice; "and I ask you as a friend to take it back. I want no man's blood on my hands, *I* don't."

His fingers were clutched at something in the breast of his coat, and he waited for the reply of the man who had insulted him. Bloody flashes came into his cruel eyes in that moment.

"I say it ag'in," said Bill Epps. "Liar and cheat?"

There was a sudden bound, a flash of steel, and a long knife was buried to the hilt in the heart of the speaker, who dropped like a log, the malediction with which he greeted the blow frozen on his lips.

There was a moment of silence in that fierce band, and then a yell for vengeance rose. They parted into two groups, and weapons were drawn on both sides.

"Dorg eat dorg," thought Sile. "Go it, my beauties. I hope you may fight till thar ain't a man of you left. Sarves you right if you do."

"Give him up?" yelled the faction which favored the dead Tory. "We'll hang the little thief."

"Let him alone!" shouted the others. "Bill Epps got jest what he desarved."

Swords were drawn, pistols cocked, rifles leveled, and a fierce conflict seemed imminent, when a man bounded suddenly between the contending parties, holding a pistol in each hand. It was Joseph Amos. His eyes flashed fire and his whole frame shook with passion.

"Stand back," he shouted; "stand back, the pack of you. Drop your weapons. By heaven, the man who disobeys my orders, dies by my hand."

The men lowered their weapons, in surprise and dismay, for it was evident that they feared their leader. "The colonel!" was the word that passed from mouth to mouth.

"Is this the way you prepare yourselves to do your duty

to the king? Can not I leave you for a moment, but I find you quarreling and murdering? Lew Peters, stand forward."

The man who had killed Bill Epps sullenly obeyed, holding his head down.

"What quarrel did you have with the man at our feet?" demanded the leader.

"He said I cheated at keerds," muttered the murderer.

"Williams, you were playing. Did Lew Peters cheat or not?"

"Yes, curnel," replied the man.

"You lie!" roared Peters.

"If yer git clear of the curnel, I'll hev yer life fur that word," said Williams; "now mind that."

"Silence," said Joseph. "Yates, you were also playing; did he cheat?"

"No he didn't," said Yates; "Williams lies."

"Perhaps you would like to take a little walk with me, Mister Yates," said Williams; "an' we kin settle that little diffikilty in the twinklin' of an eye. Bring along yer rifle."

"I'm yer man," said Yates; "ye kain't bluff *me*, hoss. I'm a tarer from Georgia, whar they raise *men*. I don't turn my back on no low-bred Alabama mud-cock I ever seed."

"Don't say nothin' ag'in' Alabama!" yelled another of the gang; "I ain't gwine to stand that."

"Listen to me," said Joseph. "The next man who speaks before he is spoken to, I will shoot. Do you all understand me? I think you know I am a man of my word."

A dead silence fell upon the place. They knew that the man who first spoke was doomed. In these bands the strongest will ruled; no man among them would have dared to lift a hand against the "curnel." He was known far and wide as a strict disciplinarian—one who would not suffer a word to be said in opposition to his will.

"Once more: any one who saw this game lift his hand."

"Half a dozen in the party raised their right hands. These men the young Tory singled out, and asked their opinion on the subject. Their views varied, and half a dozen fights were

arranged, through the agency of frowns and gestures, before the examination was over.

"Low Peters," said Joseph; "you have murdered one of my best men."

"Murdered! That's a hard word, curnel. He insulted me. Remember that I stood it when he threw the keeds in my face and called me a cheat. I only asked him to take it back," said Peters.

"I repeat what I said. You have killed a man who would have been of great service to me in the coming campaign; for, though a great villain, he knew how to make himself useful. What have you to say against my shooting you down as you stand?"

"I wouldn't do it, curnel," said the man.

"Your reasons?"

"I have three."

"State them."

"In the first place, you have lost one good man, as you say. Now, what sense is there in killing another just as good, or better than he was?"

"To prevent his killing more of my men," replied Joseph.

"Second: I've got friends. They won't stand by and see me killed for defendin' of my honor, as any gentleman ought."

"That for your friends," said Joseph, snapping his fingers. "I don't value them no more than that, as far as fearin' is concerned. Your third reason?"

"You may miss me; and as sure as you do, so sure I kill you!" hissed Peters.

"Scoundrel, do you threaten me? Seize him, boys!"

No one moved. They feared the murderer.

"Do you hear? Hold him tight," shouted Joseph.

"He's got a knife, curnel," said Williams; "an' he's a des'prit little villain."

"Never fear him. At him, I say—I will aid you."

They dared not move, and Joseph sprung at him with an angry cry. The knife flashed, and the sharp point glanced from a button on the coat of the leader, inflicting a long wound on the ribs—not by any means a dangerous cut, or one likely to disable him, but very painful. This sight aroused the

anger of the men, who all liked their leader, and they seized him in seizing the murderer. The friends of Bill Epps were particularly active.

"Fetch a rope!" bawled Williams. "We may as well hang him now. He kain't kill no more in *this* camp, I allow."

"Ay, ay," said Joseph; "a rope for the villain. "If it had not been for the button, I should have been a dead man. I'll hang him higher than Haman."

"It's jest ez well," said Lew Peters. "Hang me. I'm sartin to be hung *some* day or other; a gipsy said it. Hang away, and be darned to you; I'm not afraid."

"Have you any thing to say against it, you white-faced renegade?" roared Joseph. "You have attempted the life of your superior officer; you are doomed by all law."

"Then shoot me. I'd like to fool the gipsy," said Peters; "shoot me, and I'll thank you."

"No, hang him, hang him!" roared his enemies. "Don't let him git away."

"He shall hang fast enough. Throw the rope over the limb of that scrub-oak out there, Ned. What; can't you reach it? Climb the tree, then."

This order ought to have been of little importance to Sile, but it was not. In order to get a better view of the camp, he had seized the moment when they were engaged in securing Lew Peters, to climb the very tree indicated. Hearing the order of Joseph, he felt himself to be in a tight place. But the answer of the man called Ned lifted a weight from his breast.

"I kin throw it over, carnal. 'Thar she goes."

The end of the rope flew into the air and got fouled in the tree within reach of Sile's hand. Seeing his danger if he suffered it to remain, he disengaged it quickly, trusting that they would not see his movements. As he loosened it, the end dropped over the required limb, and was seized upon by the men below, who pulled it taut. A noose had been formed in the other end. The prisoner was led beneath the limb, and the cord adjusted about his neck. His hands were tied behind his back; but, leaping lightly from the sod, he administered a kick with both feet which sent Joseph Amos reeling

to the earth. The "colonel" rose, foaming, and very nearly cheated the gallows of its due. His hand was already on the lock of the pistol, when he remembered that the man sought to enrage him on purpose to be shot.

"I won't gratify you, my man," said he. "Up with him, my lads. Or, stay! You hain't got a prayer to say?"

"Never *you* mind," said the impenitent murderer. "I ain't got nothin' to be sorry for, but that I didn't finish *you*."

Joseph gave the signal, and the body of the murderer was swaying in the air. They fastened the end of the rope to a tree and left him there, turning away, careless of his dying struggles, or the ghastly contortions of his face, showing horribly in the moonlight—dying, without a pining look, even from those who a moment before had been his champions.

She had been in terrible danger before, but never in a position so appalling as this. Below him swayed the body of the Tory, his tongue protruding, his eyes starting from his head, and seeming to look up at him with a horrible leer. Beneath the tree stood the group of savage executioners, careless of the fate of the man who had been their comrade in many a perilous fray.

"Lew makes a handsome corpse," said Williams, laughing. "See him grin. I wonder if he hears me. He ain't quite dead."

"He mout hear you better if he was," said the man called Ned, with a shudder. "Poh; I can't stand the sight of a man hangin'. It's no pretty thing. We mout any of us come to it, some day. Ha! don't you think he moved?"

"I'd swear I thought that noise came from his tree," said Williams, with a puzzled look. "Blame it, why can't he hang quiet. No tricks on yer friends, old fel'. It won't do!"

"Now, curnel," said one of the men, "we'd like our orders, if you please."

"I came to get you ready for the march. Haley will lead you to the place where Pyle is camped, and from that we go to make a junction with Cornwallis. There will be stirring times again in the State before many days. Greene will turn upon the earl."

"We ain't goin' to be jined to the rig'lars," said Williams, in a tone of disgust. "They always want the best of the

pickin's. 'Tain't no use for us to try. They will have the best chances. Now, I know a good many houses in this section that ought to be gutted. They wouldn't call it by that name, but, in my poor way of thinkin', sequestrate and pickin's mean the same thing."

"There are many of your opinion, sergeant; but, for the present, we must stay with Cornwallis. Perhaps only for a month or two. In the end, we shall be left to take care of this region."

"And mighty good care we will take of it," laughed Williams. "Wimmin, silver, and hosses! *That's* the way I put them down. And the wimmin stands fast. I always set up for a ladies' man, curnel. When do we go?"

"You must march in the morning. At least, most of you must go; and I will follow in a short time. I want you to pick out ten men for special service, and do a little job for me. Come this way, sergeant."

He drew the man aside, and spoke to him in a low tone for several moments. At the end of that time they returned to the band.

"You are sure you understand my orders, sergeant? Do what you will with any thing you find. But no injury to her, mind."

"All right, curnel. Thank you for givin' me a chainece. When do—"

Whatever the man intended to say was suddenly cut short. There was a crackling of branches above them, and Sile fell to the ground, with the broken branch on which he had leaned. The next moment he had plunged into the forest, running like a deer away from the astounded, half-paralyzed men.

CHAPTER X.

TORIES' WORK.

"SILE STAPLE!" shouted Amos. "After him, men! Ten guineas to the man that brings me his body, living or dead."

It only needed that incentive to set the wild band in motion. Yelling like Indians, they went off on a hot trail. Half a dozen bullets followed the adventurous fellow; but harmlessly. Few men knew the woods better than he. It was a hot chase. Over the wet hummocks, splashing through the pools, diving under the trailing vines, went the swamp-suckers, guided only by the sound. They knew there was only one path from their retreat, and they followed him with a speed which bade fair to run him down. He heard them close behind, panting through the underbrush, and with a sense of fear which he had rarely felt before, he heard the bay of a blood-hound, the property of Joseph Amos, which the Tory had loosed immediately. Sile never slackened his speed for a moment. His only hope was to get far enough ahead of his pursuers to give the dog battle, and kill him before they could come up. For half a mile the hound was in the rear, and he felt that the shouts of his other pursuers sounded further off. Crossing a little opening, he was conscious that the savage brute was close upon him, and turned. Not ten feet away, with the foam dropping from his red lips and hot tongue, and his fiery eyes gleaming in the moonlight, bounded the blood-loving brute. Dropping on one knee, Sile drew a pistol and fired. The next moment they were down together, the left hand of the scout fastened in the loose hide upon the monster's neck with a vice-like grasp, and his right holding a gleaming knife. There was a suppressed howl, a deep breath from Sile, and he rose, stained with the blood of the dead dog, and was off like the wind. He had left the single path now, and a dozen different ways were open to him. He plunged into one which would lead him by a circuitous way to the

house of Merrill. The sound of pursuit died away in the distance, and he sunk down on a hummock, weary, but safe, panting for breath.

For an hour he remained silent, fearing that he might fall in with some party returning from the search. A strange stillness had fallen on the swamp, and as he rose to depart the moon went down, leaving him in darkness. He went on a little way, but found it next to impossible to proceed; so, lying down on a grassy knoll, he fell asleep.

When the brave scout woke, the first gray light of morning was stealing through the leaves, and he could see his way. He set out at once for Merrill's. As he advanced he was conscious that a dense smoke was drifting slowly above the tree-tops in front. With a sickening sensation tugging at his heart he quickened his pace, and came out upon the plantation. His worst fears were realized. The house was a heap of blackening ruins, and the smoke he saw was rising in dense volumes to the sky. Advancing quickly, he stumbled over the prostrate body of some person, lying concealed. His first thought was to grapple with the person, when a voice which he knew well cried out, in accents of fear:

"Dar, dar, Massa Tory. I gibs up. I's nothing but a pooh nigger."

It was Neddy, the boy who did the odd jobs about the plantation.

"Git up, you stupid fool," said Sile. "Don't keep me waitin', or I'll skin you. I will, I swear to gracious! What is the meaning of all this?"

"How you s'pose I kin tell? I ain't done nothin' to you, Massa Tory," said Neddy.

"Look at me, you blockhead. Do I look like a Tory? I'll knock you all full of holes ef you don't tell me who done this yer."

"Ki!" said Neddy, looking at the speaker for the first time. "Dat you, Massa Sile? Oh, de high golly! Nebber so grad in all my life. T'ought you was Tory. Yes I did! W'at you t'ink? Ef dem Tory ain't come yer, burn house, steal all t'ings, ef'ar 'way. Oh, de Lor'."

"Whar is Miss Lizzie?"

"Dey tek her away. Yes dey did. So help me gracious

dey put her on boss an' tek her 'way off. Can't tell wha' she been gone, nohow. Oh, de high jimini! I's so weak!"

"Did you know them?"

"I don' want to know dem. S'pose dis nigger gwine stay dere, an' be sent to Charleston? Don' I know dey tuk all Massa Singleton's people, dey did, an' sen' 'em dar? Nebber see Car'lina no more, den!"

"Which way did they go? Tell a straight story, or off goes yer ears," said Sile.

"See yerry, massa; I tells you true. I been sleep hard. I wuk good deal yesserday. I been lay down in cabin Pooty soon I yerry 'em holler. I jump up, an' run out. Hide under de bushes. Den I see 'bout twenty t'ousand Tories all roun' de house. Golly! I bin scare'. Dey eat up ebbery t'ing."

"Now hold on. How many did you see?"

"Twenty t'ousan'," said Neddy, nodding his head vigorously.

"How many did you *count*?"

"'Leben!" said Neddy.

"That's more like it. Wal, go on. Make a short story."

"Dey eat up ebbery t'ing in de house. Den dey drink all dey c'u'd swill; git berry drunk. Dey git out wagin, an' tek way t'ree ha'l wine. Den dey brung out Miss Lizzie. She try for to kill one Tory, but he dodge de ball. Den dey go 'way."

"Which way?"

"I reckon dey been gone to swamp."

"Good heavens! It must be a part of the gang of Joe Amos."

"No 'tain't, massa. Poo! Massa Joe, he bin dead, suah."

"Dead?"

"Yeh. Don' I know dat he go to bed long time ago Him stay dere. Nebber come out no meah. All bu'n up!"

"He'll burn some day, I reckon, but his time ain't come yit, more's the pity! Durn it. I'd rather fight two Tories this munnit, than to tell the cap'n this news. Hark!"

The blast of a bugle sounded on the clear air of the morning.

"Now I'll risk a sovereign to your old shoes, that yonder comes Cap'n Graham's troop. What kin I say? I slept

last night, when I orter been here. But, who'd a thort the mean skunk would 'a set his men to attack a lone woman in her home? It ain't manly. I say, durn an' blast sech a man."

"Who comin'?" said Neddy, in some alarm. "I don't tink I like for see any Tory now. I don't want to go to Charleston, dis time."

"These are friends," said Sile. "I'd cut my hand off sooner than meet them. But, it must be done."

The sound of the approaching horsemen grew louder, and Sile could see that they quickened their speed.

"The lad sees the smoke," said he. "I wonder if he feels wuss than I did when I seen it?"

As he spoke, the troop of Graham dashed into the plantation, Charles riding a hundred yards in advance of the rest. He was the first to see the ruin. His bridle dropped from his nerveless hand, and the man who had ridden undaunted through a score of battles, sat in his saddle weak as a child. Sile darted out of the cover and grasped his hand.

"B'ar up, b'ar up, cap'n; all is not lost. We'll save her yit," he said.

"Oh, Sile, Sile! Where is she?" he moaned.

"It's got to be said. The Tories have her. But, we kin save her, p'raps."

"The Tories? Explain."

In as few words as possible, the scout told the story of that night. The men sat in their saddles and listened.

"And what I think is this," said Sile, in conclusion. "This is a trick of Joe Amos'. He didn't want to be seen in it himself, so he sent Williams and the rest to do the job. An' they've done it. Cuss 'em."

"Let Joseph Amos beware," said Charles, grasping his sword-hilt. "He is laying up a heavy reckoning against himself. Ah, when the day comes for us to meet in battle, may my arm be palsied if I shrink from his sword. Come on."

"Whar you goin'? I s'pose you've got orders, ain't you?"

"Orders! What are orders to me now? And yet, I dare not break them."

"What are the orders?"

"To march north and effect a junction with Lee, who is in pursuit of Tarleton."

"Then we must go. Where do you mean to meet Lee?"

"Somewhere on the Haw. But, do you think I will leave the woman I love in the hands of this wretch? I would as soon turn my sword against my country's breast."

"No you won't! We *must* obey orders. You ain't the only one that has suffered from the Tories. I've lost a brother by them, a man that never did a wrong thing in his life. A rough man to be sure, but, he was true. No, cap'n. Our sorrows never came to us to stand between us an' the kentry. *That* comes last of all. And if the woes come, we must b'ar them. Joe Amos is a bad man, but he won't do the gal any greater wrong than forcing her to marry him."

"And is not *that* wrong enough?"

"Pooty bad," said Sile. "But, a bullet kin take him out of the saddle as easy as another man. I reckon he'll go under one of these days, and as likely as not you kin be the man to do his business. We kin follow their trail, though. They have gone north."

"Thank you, Sile. Oh, thank you. It will not be breaking the orders to march after them, if their course takes them to the Haw. Lead the way. Oh, if I can get him within my saber's length! What a scene this will be for the eyes of poor Merrill. It would kill him. I am sare of it. Come on."

Lizzie Merrill had been sleeping for some hours when she was suddenly awakened by the yells of the villains by whom she was captured. Coming down, half dressed, and armed with a pair of pistols, she found the men of Amos' command crowding into the passage, laughing boisterously. They had caught James, the butler, and were belaboring him severely, when she came out.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "How dare you maltreat the man?"

"Don't ask too many questions, my beauty," ejaculated Williams. "We kin attend to you by an' by. Now, you sooty son of thunder, bring up some wine. Old Merrill killed Beals here. He'll git his pay to-night. Why don't

the nigger start? Stir him up with a bayonet, Neddy. That's right. Now, kin you git the wine?"

"Oh yes, massa," said the man. "I git it right now, if you luf I go, an' don't hurt a pooh nigger so."

"That's enough. Let him go. I'll make this house warm before I quit. This is the place where they kill men, ain't it? I'll see if it will burn. You gal up thar, you'd better be gittin' on your things. You've got to go with us, when we git done here."

Lizzie had retreated to her room, bolted and locked the door, and proceeded to pile up the furniture before it. She had little hope of being able to make a successful resistance, but she had a sort of half-formed hope that she might hold out until the coming of Graham. The fellows below drank deep, and in drunken wrath destroyed the furniture, throwing bottles through mirrors, defacing pictures, and burning holes in the carpets. They were disappointed in finding silver. That had long before gone to the camp of Greene.

"Let's get the gal and go," said Williams. "Perhaps old Merrill would like to kill another man. Whar's the gal?"

"She went into that room," said one of the sentinels.

"You go up and call her," ordered the sergeant. The man went up and tried the door.

"It's locked," he shouted.

"Speak to her."

The Tory called and received no answer. Peeping through the key-hole, he saw her sitting upon the bed, pale but determined, holding a pistol in each hand.

"She's game," bawled the man. "She's got pistols. Come up yer."

The party tumbled up the stairs in a tumultuous mass, shouting and laughing. They tried the door, but the stout oak resisted their utmost efforts.

"Git me an ax," cried Williams, calling to James. "You go with him, Neddy, and see that he don't run away. Put a bayonet through him if he backs up an inch."

Under the compulsion of a bayonet, James found an ax, and carried it to Williams.

"Stand back all of you," he said. "See me make the fur fly."

A few strokes of the heavy ax shattered the door, and drove it from its hinges. They then put their shoulders against it and pushed it over. The barricade was broken down, but no man dared pass in. The defiant attitude of the girl filled them with fear. They had heard from their escaped comrades how she had defended herself against the party of Beals, and they had respect for her courage. But, being drunk they were braver than under other circumstances. Williams sprung forward, and in doing so stumbled on the broken furniture in the doorway. The accident saved his life, for at that moment, Lizzie fired one pistol after the other. Both balls flew over him, wounding Neddy slightly in the shoulder.

Williams sprung up with a loud laugh.

"Give it up, my lady," said the fellow, grasping her arm. "'Tain't no use to hold out. You're caught. Come with me."

"Where will you take me, villain?"

"Good words, my pretty. They will do as well as hard ones. I am a gentleman, I am! You don't often find a better one."

She only replied by a look of scorn, but suffered herself to be led away. As they left the house the sergeant gave a low-voiced order to his men. They understood him, and in ten minutes the bright flames burst from the roof of the dwelling, and a column of thick smoke rolled slowly upward. With a bursting heart Lizzie saw the house where she had lived so happily for many years rapidly turning to a heap of smoking cinders. The Tories looked on with grim delight. Every thing of value which could be easily carried away had been removed, and was already packed on horses.

"Such be the fate of all houses that cover the heads of Whigs!" was the malediction of Williams.

"God will surely punish such desecration of houses," replied the girl, warmly. "Take me where you will, and a curse shall follow you."

"Don't hurry me. I like to see the thing burn. If I'd a torch in my hand that would light the house of every Whig in the Carolinas at one tech, mebbe I wouldn't do it."

"You are capable of any villainy, I can readily believe," rejoined the brave girl.

"No more words," said Williams. "Forward, men. The devil himself couldn't save that house now."

They marched all the rest of that night over roads well known to the fair prisoner. She knew that they were riding to the northward. One by one she passed familiar places which she feared she might never see again. In her desolation she thought of every conceivable plan of escape, but the lynx-like watch which the Tories kept up rendered it impossible. As the hours flew by, and she grew weary with riding, she thought, in a dreamy, indistinct way, of Captain Graham, of Sile Staple and his Yankee friend, and prayed that they might come to her rescue. But how could they know? Sile was away in the woods; Graham and Lige Pickersel not yet in Chesterfield, perhaps. They might not come to her aid until it was too late.

They rode hard for three days, and as the first gray light of the fourth morning began to show itself, Deep river lay before them, and, on the other side, a body of cavalry. Bill Williams advanced to the bank and waved a signal to them. It was answered in like manner, and in a few moments a boat was seen to shoot out from the other bank, and neared their side of the stream. The single paddler stood erect in the stern, sculling toward them against the current.

"Is that you, Barney?" demanded Williams.

"Yis," said Barney, with an unmistakable Irish brogue; "it's just me; I'll take the leddy over."

"Git into the boat," said Williams, addressing Lizzie.

She obeyed, and was ferried to the other side. The first person she met was Joseph Amos, his face wearing a look of sullen resolution.

CHAPTER XI.

PYLE'S POND—THE END

AT the sight of his dark face, she understood who her enemy was, and by whose means her home lay in ruins. It needed only this to complete her detestation of him. Even he could see its effect upon her, in the gesture of repugnance with which she refused his assistance in stepping to the bank.

"You give me a strange greeting," said he, frowning darkly.

"Do you deserve a better?" she asked. "Ah, Joseph Ames, if you had seen, as I saw, the flames over the roof-tree where I have spent so many happy years, and felt as I felt, the conviction that never more could I revisit the dear old rooms I had learned to love, you would detest the man who caused this ruin, as heartily as I detest *you*."

"What do you mean?" he said, flushing. "How can I understand you?"

"Easily enough. My home is burned; do you pretend to say it was not by your orders?"

"Certainly it was not; I gave my men no orders beyond telling them to bring you here. They have fulfilled their duty. If, in the execution of the same, they have done any wrong, they shall be punished."

"Was it not wrong to tear me from my home?" she demanded.

"No; I ordered them to do it."

"What do you hope to gain by it?"

"Hope to gain, my dear girl? I thought you understood me before. I am going to marry you."

"You can not. I refuse to be your wife," she said.

"Oh, I don't mind that. Of *course* you refuse; but we have a chaplain in our corps who will not stop for any such little informality as the consent of the bride. Do not suppose that will delay the marriage for a moment; I give you *my* word it will not."

"We shall see," she said.

"Certainly, and we shall not be long in seeing. Seriously, my dear girl, your petty resistance will avail you nothing. I have provided against every thing; in addition to that, I have determined to shorten the period of your probation. We shall be married to-morrow. Make up your mind to that."

"I will die first."

"Oh, no; you will do nothing of the kind. I have heard several young ladies make the same remark when they could not have their own way in every thing, but I never noticed that any of them kept their word as far as dying was concerned."

"I will kill you."

"Very likely, if I give you an opportunity; you are quite capable of it, I know; but, even against that little contingency I have also provided; in fact, my dear girl, you are entirely in my power."

"Do not believe it, Joseph Amos. There is a God over all, who will not suffer an innocent maiden to be betrayed; I trust in Him!"

"Do," sneered Amos; "see if He will help you. To-morrow you shall be my wife; and when we are married and you are mine beyond the power of removal, I will seek this Graham, whom you love, and by any and every means, remove him from my path."

"You dare not meet him; I trust him against any cowardly Tory in Carolina."

"I do not care what means I take to cut off his hateful life; it is nothing to me so that I kill him somehow; in these last few days a loathing of the man has grown in my heart for which I can not account. I seem to see him lying before me, dead, with a bloody mark upon his brow. Pray heaven the time may come soon—the sooner the better, say I."

"You are a wretch. Never speak to me again; I shall have nothing to say to you from this moment," she said.

"Not a word?"

She gave him no answer.

"Think of it. We must ride some distance side by side."

and it will be impossible for you to hold your tongue for that period. I have offered a handsome reward for a woman who can sit in company where other ladies are talking scandal, and hold her tongue. I think you had better not make any rash vows."

Still no answer.

"Fall in there, men!" shouted the Tory, angrily. "What are you staring at? Boot and saddle, bugler. Forward toward the Haw."

The wild band were in motion, and moving off in quick time toward the distant camp. Leaving Deep river behind them, they marched toward the Haw, so named from the abundant growth of hawthorn about that region. The country between the two rivers is a constant succession of red clay hills, heavily wooded to their very summits, with oak, gum, black locusts, and chestnuts. Small streams run between the hills, and in summer make beautiful scenery. But at that premature period of the year the trees had not reached their full beauty. The roads, formed mostly of clay, were very hard to traverse. Lizzie felt herself sinking with the fatigue of so long a ride. Perhaps he saw this in her face, for, about one o'clock, he halted and prepared dinner. His first care was to bring her some venison and potatoes, apologizing for his poverty in provisions. She did not speak to him, but took the food and eat heartily. Her persistent refusal to speak annoyed him more than he would be willing to say.

"Confound it, my girl; one might say such conduct is unlady-like," he said.

She only answered by a contemptuous smile. It was evident she did not fear him.

"Listen to me, Lizzie Merrill; I desire an answer. Do you mean to persist in your refusal to speak to me?"

She bowed gravely and turned away, as if to rid herself of his importunity. But he was not to be put off.

"We are quite near the Haw now," he said, and our camp is but little more than two miles beyond; in that camp are many gentlemen whom I am proud to call my friends. I wish you to treat them well, as my destined wife should."

She would not answer. In his rage he seized her by the arm, and gave her a shake. The little Spanish blood in her

veins boiled over at the insult, and she suddenly drew the little dagger which she had worn all through these dangerous times, and made a stroke at him. It was only by throwing his body aside that he eluded the point. By the exercise of his superior strength he wrested the weapon from her hand and put it in his belt. Then, holding both her arms, he forced her to sit down upon the log from which she had arisen, and seated himself by her. Looking up, he saw a broad grin on the faces of nearly every man in the band.

"What are you all grinning at?" he said. "Lieutenant, order the men into line and ride forward. I will follow you directly."

The lieutenant obeyed, and the band rode away, leaving them together. When his men were out of hearing, Joseph turned to her with a look upon his face she had never seen there before—a cruel, savage smile, which showed all his white teeth, glistening like the fangs of a tiger.

"You don't know that I have a devil of a temper, my girl," he said. "Let me give you a word of warning, at this time. Beware how you ever dare attempt my life, as you have done this day. A repetition of that attempt will change my heart toward you so utterly, that you will wish you had never been born, rather than fall into my hands. I could almost find it in my heart to do you an injury which would break that stubborn heart of yours; beware how you drive me to it."

His looks appalled her. At that moment, she would have preferred the companionship of any savage beast.

He did not say another word, but rising, assisted her to the saddle, and they rode away together, his face still wearing that cruel look. The Haw now lay before them, bright in the afternoon sun, and they were hurried across as before. The roads were full of men, all marching toward a single point. Many of them knew Amos, and saluted him respectfully. All were armed heavily and were of all ages, from the beardless boy of sixteen to the grizzled man of sixty. All cast inquisitive glances at the young girl, but no one addressed her. Joseph quickened his pace, and they soon came to the camp of the royalists. Colonel Pyle, assisted by Amos, had

by great labor gathered this band of men, procured them horses, and was now waiting for the coming of Tarleton before advancing to join Cornwallis.

The colonel rode out to meet them. "I am glad to see you, my dear sir," he said. "Your detachment has just come in. The regiment only needed them to make a fair show. Miss Merrill, I am your very humble servant."

"Colonel Pyle," said Lizzie, "you used to be a gentleman. Let me ask if you uphold this person in his persecution of me?"

"Persecution? Hem! One can hardly say, my dear Miss. There is a difference of opinion in this matter. What you regard as persecution *he* might regard as the warmth of passion."

"I ask you to take me out of his hands. I appeal to you for protection."

"Hem!" said the colonel. "You place me in a very delicate situation. In fact, I do not know how to act. Colonel Amos is my equal in rank, in reality, though I am the nominal leader of the regiment. I do not see, hem! how I can interfere."

"You are like the rest," she said, coldly. "You fear this man. Let me have some place where I can rest."

"My tent is at your disposal," said the colonel, obsequiously. "Shall I lead you to it?"

"Excuse me. If you will point it out I can go myself. I take no assistance from mine enemy."

"Do you regard me as an enemy?" queried the colonel. "Far from it: I am your slave."

"No gallant speeches, colonel. You have refused to aid me when I am in the greatest trouble and danger. This is the tent? Good day, sir."

Without a word or look at Amos, she entered the tent and dropped the curtain behind her. Pyle looked at his friend, and laughed.

"I do not see any thing so very comical," said the other, angrily.

"Don't you?" said the colonel. "I do. But, let's talk business. Tarleton is on his way here, and we must be ready."

"How do you know?"

"One of our scouts just brought me word. The colonel will be here directly, perhaps to-day, at least early to-morrow."

"I am glad to hear it. If we get with Tarleton we shall have active service. The men are looking finely."

"So I think. We can do much for the king; and then, the very name of Tarleton has been a tower of strength, though, to be sure, these rascally troopers of Sumter and Morgan have somewhat taken away the prestige of his name. I don't see, for my part, how he let the scoundrels outwit him. I consider our troops a match for Maiten's brigade, Sumter's troop, or the Legion of Harry Lee, or all combined."

"The Legion is a good troop," said Amos. "Don't disparage them. A part of them met with Archie Campbell not a month ago, and made the fur fly among his dragoons. Mad Archy only escaped by dint of spur."

"He will die in harness," said Pyle. "Ha! Here comes two of my scouts. How now, Davids?"

"Tarleton is in this region," said the man. "Shall we ride out and meet him?"

"Do so. Present my compliments to him, and tell him that I am here with my troop, anxious to join him. And if he will advance he shall be made welcome."

"I have work to do before the coming of Tarleton," said Amos. "I shall be married before you see his horses' heads. You must aid me. Williams, tell Chaplain Fobisher that I require his presence in the colonel's tent."

"Why this haste, my dear sir," said Pyle. "I can hardly give my countenance to it."

"You *must*. I will not wait for the coming of Tarleton. From him I have nothing to fear, but, there are men in his command who would feel called upon to interfere, and I should have half a dozen duels on my hands in as many minutes. Many of the officers were enamored with Lizzie while in Charleston, and would take her part. Now, Williams; did you speak to the chaplain?"

"Yes, sir," replied Williams. "He's coming."

As he spoke a man with a face which indicated strongly a love of good liquor emerged from a tent near at hand, and came toward them. He looked and acted like a drunken chaplain, as indeed he was.

"Good-day, Colonel Amos. You sent for me. Always on hand, whether at a feast, a wedding or a funeral. Ha, ha! What job have you for me?"

"I wish to be married, and you are to do it," said Joseph.

"I congratulate you, colonel. Mars and Venus in conjunction. The other party is no doubt the beautiful damsel who rode into camp with you. I honor your taste, upon my soul I do. And they always said John Fobisher had an eye for a fine woman."

"Hark you, chaplain. There are ten guineas. If the young lady does not say yes very loudly, you need not stop on *that* account. Even if she should say no, you will call it a joke, and proceed."

"I see," said the chaplain; "a good joke, upon my word. I'll do it. Ten guineas. How I love the image of the king."

"Come on, then. Or stay. Let me speak to her. You stand here, and when I call you, come in. I want you for a witness, colonel."

"I—I'd rather not," stammered Pyle.

"You must come. I claim this much at your hands. You owe me something, I think. Be ready to come. You may come with him, Williams."

Amos went away, and in a moment his voice was heard in a loud attempt at making Lizzie talk. She did not answer him, and in a moment he appeared at the door and beckoned them in. They came at once—Colonel Pyle, who had some little sense of the small position in which he was placed, keeping near the door. The moment they appeared, Lizzie's tongue was loosed.

"Now, at least, I have some one that I can talk with, for I will not exchange a word with this insulter of women. Colonel Pyle, I appeal to your sense of honor not to stand tamely by, and see me insulted by this base wretch. I have told him that I do not love him—do not even respect him. I have begged of him to think of me no more, and now he comes to force me to marry him."

"My dear young lady," began Pyle.

"No, sir. Your answer at once. Will you save me from this man?"

"My de—"

"Yes, or no!" she replied, stamping her foot.

"It is impossible for me to answer you in a word," replied the colonel. "I assure you that it would afford me great pleasure to be of service to you, but circumstances over which I have no control have tied my hands."

"In other words, you refuse to help me. Then, may you fail of help in time of trial! May your friends forsake you; may sure and swift destruction light on you and on your band. I leave you to take counsel with your own cowardly heart, to decide in what hole you will hide your head. What nook or corner of the earth is so small that you could not conceal yourself therein?"

Pyle fell back in great confusion.

"I turn to you next," she said, speaking to the chaplain. "You wear the cloth which distinguishes a high and holy calling. Do not degrade it by making yourself the instrument of this base man."

"Excuse me," said the chaplain. "You use harsh language. Colonel Amos, shall the marriage proceed?"

"Certainly," said Amos, seizing her about the waist. "Now, cry out if you will. There is no man in this band will heed you. Go on chaplain."

At this moment a man came to the door and called out Pyle. He did not return, but sent one of his subordinates as a witness of the marriage. Amos held her in his arms, while the chaplain mumbled over the words of the service. In the midst of it, they heard the blast of a bugle. All paused to listen.

"Tarleton," said Amos, impatiently. "Go on!"

The girl was holding out her hands despairingly to the cold-hearted witnesses, begging them to hear her prayer, when the rattle of musketry, and cries of dismay, arose from the outside. The chaplain dropped his book, and rushed out. The young Tory dashed after to detain him. His eyes were greeted by an unwelcome sight. The Tories were running hither and thither in confusion, while, riding through and through their broken ranks, with bloody sabers, rode the men of Graham and Lee, shaking their red blades in the air. Where had they sprung from? Where was Tarleton?

The wonder was easily explained. Lee had crossed the Dan on the eighteenth, accompanied by the companies of Pickens and Oldham. He sent out his scouts, and ascertained that the troop of Tarleton, of whom he was in pursuit, was across the Haw. He followed them quickly, and so closely that two of Tarleton's officers were captured.

The Legion of Harry Lee greatly resembled that of Tarleton. So much so, that the country people believed him to be a support of that officer. The two prisoners, with the threat of death before their eyes, could do no less than favor the deception, and the troop marched on. At this point they were met by the two scouts of Pyle, who delivered their message. A dragoon was sent to Lee with the information, and was followed by the young men, who, like the rest, mistook "Legion Harry" for Tarleton. Lee at once sent one of the young men with the dragoon to Colonel Pyle, with his compliments, and a request that he would draw his troops to the side of the road, so that himself and his weary men could pass to their position without delay. At the same time he sent his adjutant to Pickens, who had been just reinforced by the arrival of Graham, with an order for him to place himself in the woods, on the left flank of the enemy, while he attempted their capture. It was Lee's design, when he had the enemy completely in the net, to give them an opportunity to return to their homes or to join his forces. Lee rode forward in front of his riders, and passed the royalists, who were on the right hand side of the road, and raised the cry, "God save the king!" They had mounted, and had their rifles on their backs, ready for action. The Legion countermarched, and faced the Tories, while Lee, with gracious smiles, complimented them on their loyalty and fine appearance. As he approached Pyle with extended hand, firing commenced on the left, where the royalists had discovered the militia of Pickens, and saw that they were betrayed. They immediately fired upon the troop of Eggleston, in the rear of the cavalry. That officer turned upon them, and the slaughter commenced.

It was at this moment that Amos emerged from the tent. He saw the troop upon which he had staked his all in confusion, falling man by man under the bloody sabers of the Legion; and he saw, too, his enemy, Graham, emerging from

the thicket, sword in hand. The wildest confusion reigned around, for the royalists, taken by surprise, could not bring their rifles to bear before Lee had struck the fatal blow. Graham's men were engaged, and there, fighting by the side of their captain, now near at hand, the Tory saw the hated Yankee and Sile Staple, striking gallantly, a life for every blow. The captain had an incentive to valor. For there, in the door of the tent, stood Lizzie Merrill, with clasped hands, regarding the fray.

"There she is," shouted Lige. "Oh, jimini! *Can't I fight. Git eout, yew pizen Tory. Take that!*"

Graham waved his hand to his beloved, and made desperate efforts to reach her. Amos saw that he must be successful, and turning, with a look of demoniac hatred, he discharged a pistol at her breast. She sunk to the ground with a low moan of agony, and the next moment the steel of Graham clove Joseph Amos to the chin, and he sunk to the earth a corpse. Who could stand before Graham then? He broke through to her, and raised her in his arms. The blood dropped from a wound in the shoulder, and he saw that the aim of the dastard had been far from true. The surgeon came and dressed the wound, while she lay upon her lover's breast, and the conflict raged around.

As for the gallant soldier, he held the treasure of his love in his arms, and was content.

A few words as to the characters in the story, and it is done. They buried Amos with the rest, and few were left to weep for him. Colonel Pyle, badly wounded, sought refuge beneath the dark waters of a pond near the battle-field, where, with nothing but his nose above water, he lay until Lee marched away. When they joined Greene, Lizzie still was with them. Two months after, when she had recovered from her wound, she married Charles Graham. Lige Pickerele and Sile Staple were at the wedding, and, shame to tell, both got uproariously drunk upon the occasion. They served gallantly in the troop of Graham until the close of the war. Lige wore the stripes of a color-sergeant when he returned to Salem. Two or three times a year, odd-looking letters passed between Sile and the Yankee, and about two years after the close of the struggle the latter wrote that he had surrendered

to a Yankee girl in Salem, a prisoner for life. Sile Staple's verdict was, "it sarved him right, bekase he always *was* a winnin' cuss!"

Samuel Merrill lived to a ripe old age, with the children of his dear daughter growing up about his knees, who liked nothing so well as his talk of the days when he joined the army of Greene, and related the gallant deeds of the noted Swamp Rifles.

THE END

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 How she made him propose. A duck.
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 Waterfalls. For several.</p> | <p>Mark Hastings' return. For four males.
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 Too much for Aunt Matilda. For three females.
 Wit against wit. Three females and one male.
 A sudden recovery. For three males.
 The double stratagem. For four females.
 Counting chickens before they were hatched. For four males.</p> |
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| <p>The Dark Cupid; or, the mistakes of a morning. For three gentlemen and two ladies.
 That Ne'er-do-well; or, a brother's lesson. For two males and two females.
 High art; or the new mania. For two girls.
 Strange adventures. For two boys.
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 Fandango. Various characters, white and otherwise.
 The little doctor. For two tiny girls.
 A sweet revenge. For four boys.
 A May day. For three little girls.
 From the sublime to the ridiculous. For 14 males.
 Heart not face. For five boys.</p> |
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DIME DIALOGUES, No. 23.

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| <p>Rhoda Hunt's remedy. For 3 females, 1 male.
 Hans Schmidt's recommend. For two males.
 Cheery and Grumble. For two little boys.
 The phantom doughnuts. For six females.
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 Death scene. 2 principal characters and adjuncts.
 Dress and gold. Several characters, male and female.
 Confound Miller. For three males, two females.
 Ignorance vs. justice. For eleven males.
 Pedants all. For four females.</p> |
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| <p>The goddess of liberty. For nine young ladies.
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 The music director. For seven males.
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 An unjust man. For four males.
 The shop girl's victory. 1 male, 3 females.
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Ven to tide cooms in,	A dark side view,	the Irishman,	Pictus,
D-ee laas vot Mary ha-	To pesser ray,	Peggy McCann,	The Nereides,
got,	On learning German,	Sprays from Josh Bil-	Legends of Attica,
Pat O'Flaherty on wo-	Mary's shunalt vite lamb	lugs,	The stove-pipe tragedy
man's rights,	A healthy discourse,	De circumstances ob de	A doketor's drabbles,
The home rulers, how	Tobias so to speak,	situation,	The cowning man,
they "spakes,"	Old Mrs. Grimes,	Dar's nuffin new under	The illigant affair at
Hezekiah Dawson on	a parody,	de sun,	Muldeon's,
Mothers-in-law,	Mars and cats,	A Negro religious poem,	That little baby round
He didn't sell the farm.	Bill Underwood, pilot,	That violin,	the corner,
The true story of Frank-	Old Granley,	Picnic delights,	A genuwine inference
lin's kite,	The pill peddler's ora-	Our e ndidate's views,	An invitation to 1
I would I were a boy	tion,	Dandreamy's wisdom,	bird of liberty,
again,	Widder Green's last	Plain language by truth-	The crow,
A pathetic story,	words,	ful Jane,	Out west.

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Mountains and mole-hills. Six ladies and several	Practice what you preach. Four ladies.
auditors.	Politician. Numerous characters.
A test that did not fail. Six boys.	The canvassing agent. Two males and two
Two ways of seeing things. Two little girls.	females.
Don't count your chickens before they are	Grub. Two males.
hatched. Four ladies and a boy.	A slight scare. Three females and one male.
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How uncle Josh got rid of the legacy. Two males,	How Jim Peters died. Two males.
with several transformations.	

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and one female.	two little girls.
Hasty inferences not always just. Numerous	"That ungrateful little nigger." For two males.
boys.	If I had the money. For three little girls.
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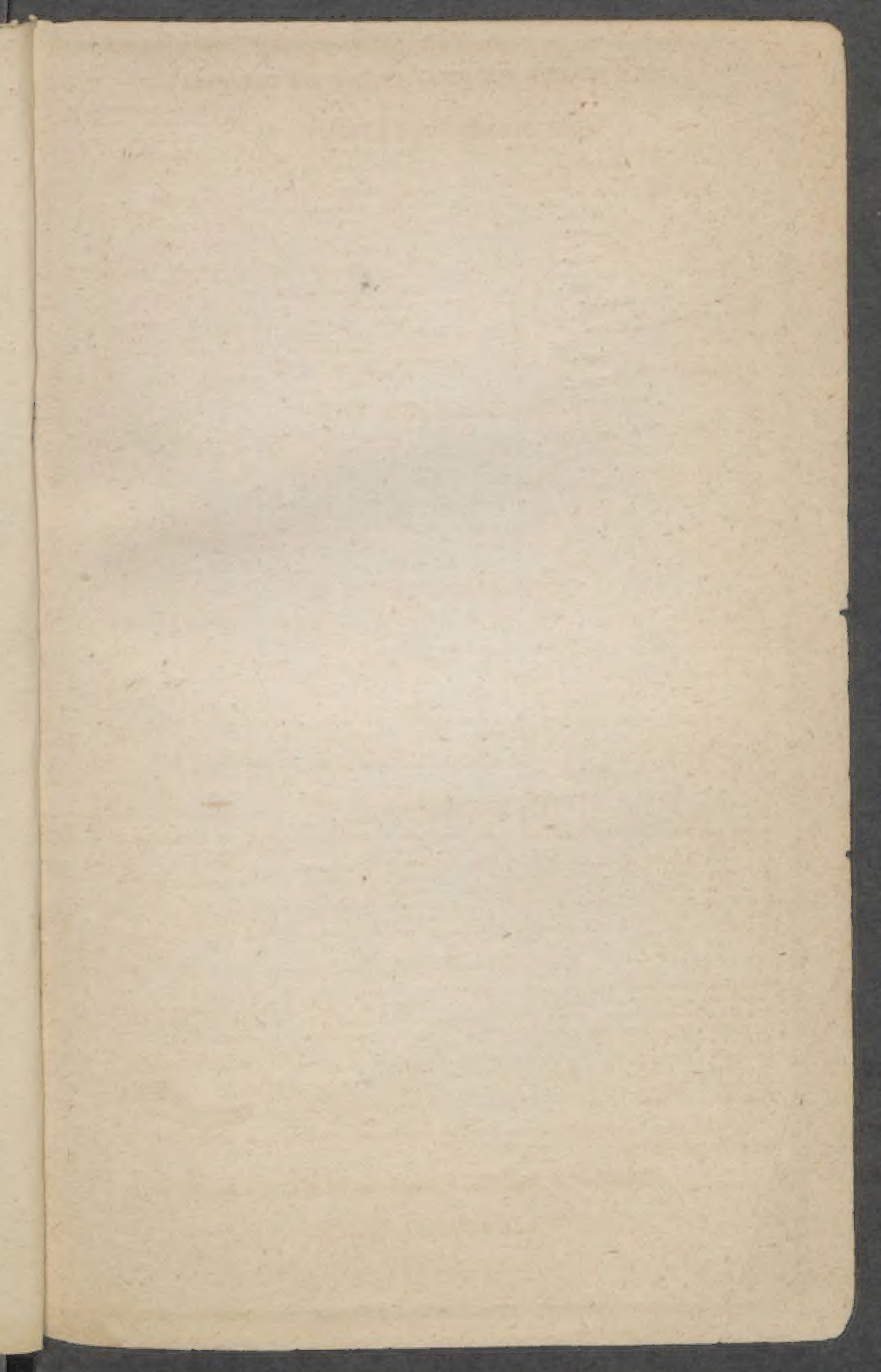
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